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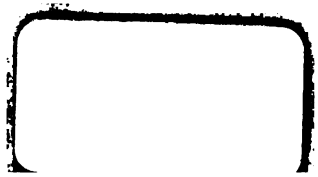

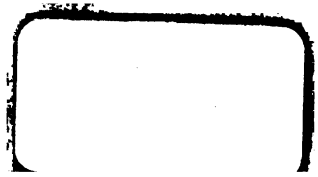

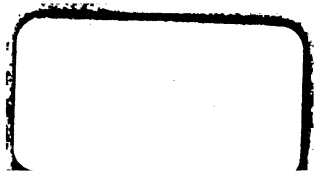

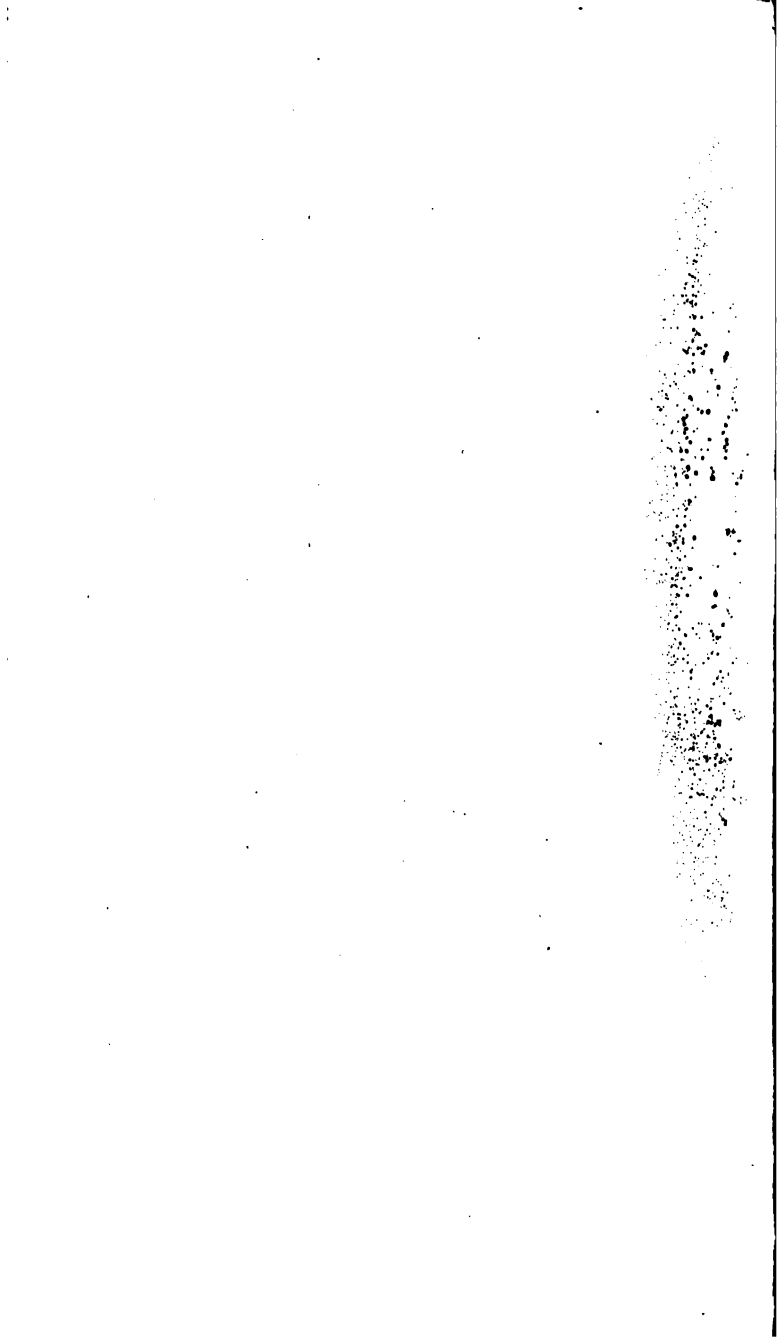

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THE

MAYOR OF WIND-GAP.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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THE

MAYOR OF WIND-GAP.

CHAPTER I.

An evening in the fine fresh month of May. Those Ephemera called, by some anglers, the May-fly, by some others the Green-Duke, and by some others, out of our country, whatever they choose to call them, had emerged in great abundance from their long imprisonment beneath the waters, and were now fulfilling the purposes of their brief atmospheric life. They swarmed in the slanting sun beams, whisking their (to them) long tails, and fluttered their mottled wings, with such an appearance of thorough enjoyment, that it seemed as if their new state of being was to be altogether devoted to worldly revelry and thoughtless love-making. In a very short time, however, after their sports, the contingent and inevitable cares, to which every animate atom is liable, engrossed them. They settled down upon the water, from

which they had arisen, preparing for a voyage (to them literally a voyage down the stream of life;) their wings, lately so alert, were, in order to serve them as sails during that voyage, soberly closed together; and, as the current carried them along, they shed their ovæ upon it, that a new race might be ensured, who should frolic in the May-beam of the ensuing year; and their providential responsibility thus discharged, they drooped and died, after having been but for a few hours the denizens of the breeze, which had summoned them into a new existence.

While these tiny creatures made their short entrances and exits, the voracious and gigantic trout was not an idle observer of some of their motions. He gulped them down in scores, either in their journey upwards, from the bottom of the river, into the regions of air, and while yet unfledged for their airy gambols, or when subsequently floating on the stream in their maternal pride, he broke the water into circles, of each of which the centre was a little vortex, formed by him for their annihilation: nor was the trout the only devourer of these truly short-lived beings; the martin, the swallow, and the swift, glancing with arrowy speed through them in mid air, or over them on the river, snatched them from the very hey-day of their pastimes.

It is well known to all "brothers of the angle" that in this refreshing month of May, when the green-duke thus sails along the water, the sportsman who skilfully imitates, and uses it, may expect to plod homeward, after the dusk of the eve-

ning, with his basket well laden on his back. Upon the evening then, which opens our tale, along the banks of a certain river in the south of Ireland, the most skilful deceiver of the finny tribe known in the parish, pursued his recreation. Through all his operations, this individual displayed the skill of a master in his art. His fishing-rod, owing to the dexterity of his jerk, cut *whistling through the calm air; his line fell smoothly* and straightly on the stream, touching it even to a hair's breadth, at the exact point he wished; and, a good copy of the green-duke powerfully aiding him, his success was equal to his adroitness; for he drew forth trout after trout, in quick succession.

Maurteen Maher seemed rather an elderly man, yet quite alert in all his movements. He was tall and thin, with angular features, a sallow complexion and a shrewd eye; and although many might call him ill-favoured, there was something inviting in his smile, and respectable in the steady intelligence of his look. The general expression of his face was, however, habit of observation, and a consciousness of intellectual superiority, perhaps ostentatiously displayed. His grayish well-combed hair fell in great profusion on his shoulders, yet he wore over it,—or rather over half of it,—a wig of three buckles; his hat was very broad-brimmed; his loose outside coat had an ample cape, and was drawn and held tight round his waist by a belt of horse-skin, which also performed the duty of suspending his fishing-panier.

In the act of extracting his favourite green-drake from a freshly taken trout, Maurteen Maher suddenly bent his head downwards and listened.

"Ay, that's her own merry little laugh,"—he soliloquized, "and 'twould be a pity, the happy heart that's in her body should ever know the blight of sorrow; and yet, for all that, as lightly as she steps along—and no bird of spring is blither—sorrow will darken over her early, if Maurteen Maher does not stand her friend."

While he spoke these words slowly and sententiously, the object of his sympathy appeared in view. Although at the beginning of his soliloquy his acute ear had distinguished her approach, by the notes of her laugh, they had at the moment been hidden from each other, by a sudden sinuosity of the river, curving with the curve of the flowery bank by which it wandered. Now, as he discovered her at a distance, Maurteen looked steadily towards the owner of "the happy little heart," and continued talking to himself:—

"The boy is at her side of a surety—and 'tisn't the running wather, nor the May-bush full of its blossom, that he cares to be looking on; no—he's looking into her eyes, to know if the love is there; and 'tisn't the song of the thrush, nor the note of the sky-lark above his head, that he's giving ear to; no—he hears nothing but her silver little voice, that turns all she spakes into music. She's joking at him, I see: Och! ay; but the glance she gives to him, and the smile that's on her lips, don't mane to tell us that she's so hard-hearted entirely. It

is just the way I thought it was. He's not the shape of a *gorsoon* a girl would darken her brow at.—Sure if it's a thing that a purty creature in the bloom of her beauty makes a boy's heart leap with joy, a young colleen may like the lad that's comely and goes brave; ay, that's a story of ould standing, as ould as the time that Adam used to be courting Eve. Long ago; but I'll *tell* ye my notion; if the good luck happened that our great-grandmother, Mistress Eve, was an ugly ould crature with wrinkles on her face, and no teeth in her gums,—when poor Adam first set his eye upon her, by my good troth we'd be in Paradise this blessed day; the poor fool of a gardener would never be ating that misfortunate apple, for an ould *calloch's* bidding, I'll be bound."

The persons thus commented on by Maurteen Maher, were a girl of twenty, and a youth perhaps a year older, and, judging by their dress, their manners, and their bearing, they belonged to the better class of society. We have never pretended to much talent in describing female beauty; in the present instance, however, it is no difficult task to say that Anny Kennedy was somewhat below the middle stature; of a perfect symmetry of shape, with a complexion clear, brilliant, blooming, yet free of vulgar redness—

"The rose insensibly mingling with the lily,"

as young ladies love to write it. It is quite as easy to declare that she possessed very dark eyes, of

which every glance was merriment, shot through a dazzling sunniness—this latter quality being softened, however, by the crystal moisture in which they swam; that her lips were very red, and very pouting, but not very saucily so—that most tantalizing expression relieving itself by an admixture of innocent playfulness; and we may add, that, anticipating her constant smile, there were courier dimples near the corners of her mouth; that in the centre of her almost transparent chin there was the mark—

"Love's dimpling finger did impress;"

that, from beneath her large-leafed, low-crowned, black silk hat, her very black hair fell, of course,

"In jetty ringlets on her snowy neck,"

ay, and sometimes wantoned over her shoulders; that her waist was tiny—for in those days young girls (and sometimes old ones too) laced themselves as tight as they do in our own day; and that her little mouse-like feet hid themselves in shoes of which the heels were nearly three inches high, but which still did not succeed in spoiling the symmetry of the exceedingly pretty objects they covered. We have presumed to say, that there would be no difficulty in mentioning these things; but at last we own to ourselves that we fail in our effort to give an idea of the guileless happiness, the twinkling intellect, the almost childish, yet full, play of mind, catching merriment from every sympathizing

object, and, withal, the scarce-hidden consciousness of superior beauty, and the youthful avidity to exact the tributes of its conquering influence, which ran through the whole of her expression.

Maurteen Maher has called Anny's companion "a gorsoon that a young colleen would not darken her brow at," and we think he was right. The lover's hair, as well as his mistress's, was very dark; his face oval, and rather pale; his eye powerful, feeling, and of strong manly character; his lip curving beautifully, whether in sternness or in smiles;—his person finely formed.—There was in his look, his air, his manner, his most ordinary address, a depth, an ardency, and yet a pathos of expression: from the very manifestations of his mere exterior, he seemed to be a man who felt every thing intensely.—At present, even under the softening influence of the universal conqueror,—he was more self-absorbed than any thing else. To be sure, the innocent lamb could not seem to be (if it ever has seemed any thing it was not) more gentle than he appeared to Anny;—and under any circumstance, or in the person of any other animal, his equal or his inferior in the intellectual scale, never could George Blundell have uttered gentler, or more timid, or even more slavish, sounds, than those to which his handsome mouth now gave utterance;—never could his strong eye have been more moistened—more subdued—more half-put-out, in fact; and yet, it is still maintained—(or rather insinuated—for we do not want really to injure the boy, if we can help it)—that all the

time Anny was thinking of him, during these symptoms, he was thinking nearly as much about himself as he was about her. Is it very new to assert such a thing?

Although Anny Kennedy loved her tamed enthusiast, still, prompted by the hey-day consciousness of her beauty and her power, she sported with him. From this we infer that she never reflected how fiery a nature, passionate for good or evil, might lie hidden under his silky mildness of demeanour towards herself. But, in truth, the effect upon him of her merely arch equivocations was, could she have understood it, something that she never would have provoked. The young man hoped, and feared, doubted, and felt certain, triumphed, and desponded, was raised to ecstasy, or lowered to misery; and all this so fretted and fevered him, as to make George Blundell a very incompetent person to engage in any other matters of life, with the calmness of mind, and the precision of action, necessary for honourable success.

"In good truth, Mr. George Blundell," said Anny, shortly before she fell under the keen, though friendly, notice of Maurteen Maher—and as she spoke, she gave her head a little coquettish movement, that put in motion the jetty curls on her ivory brow, and caused to gambol over their loved resting place the ringlets which flowed to her neck—assuming, at the same time, a mock gravity of aspect, and yet turning the full glory of her glance upon her impatient, though obsequious, victim. "In good truth, Mr. George Blun-

dell, there is something questionable in your conduct."

"Something questionable in my conduct, beautiful Anny? Good heaven,—of what can you suspect me, unworthy of the——I mean, do you suppose I could be capable, in the slightest degree, of conceiving an idea of acting, in the most trifling matter, so as to give you—the least reason to——"

"Reason to think that you have been stringing together the most ridiculous set of words I have ever listened to? So that's something questionable, is it not?" And she laughed.

He, too, tried to laugh; and, "Anny," said he, pathetically, "dear Anny, can you be serious for one minute?"

"Serious? no, indeed; serious I cannot be—serious I will not be: this is not the season for being serious; for hanging down the head and looking dull. No, sir; come to me, and ask me to be serious, when the sky lowers—when the rough blast shakes doors and windows—when the chilly sleet darkens the cheery sun—when our poor cat mopes at the hearth, and my little dog lies shivering on his cushion—(see how he *frisks* before me *now!*)—Mr. George Blundell, I am not made to be serious while the lark is soaring above me, filling the air and my poor ears with his trumpet-like melody; while the little bubbling billows of the stream dance jigs and country-dances to his music, in the light of the setting sun; while the swallow darts by

me, twittering out his evening song; while the fresh breeze flirts with my cheek—"

"Ah!" sighed George Blundell, in a very long sigh—"That's a happy breeze, Anny—"

"To be sure it is! and it is so, because it is not serious;—look, sir, look!"—and she touched his arm, and pointed across the river to a sloping meadow, with such sudden and fresh and true energy, that not only George Blundell, but also her faithful maid in waiting, close behind them, started and looked frightened, as if something was going to happen to it.

"See, how it frolics yonder, through the yet green hay! *That* has always pleased me, for it is always seen when lovely spring is at her full. Do you know, to my fancy, the in-earnest breeze sometimes appears in positive shape, as it skims over the tender meadow—"

"Darling Anny!—how beautiful and true every thing is when you describe it."

She laughed again most cheerily, and went on—

"And do you think, Master George Blundell, so foolishly of us female creatures, as not to have known beforehand that it was to make you admire me, as well as the meadow, that I described it so beautifully and true? Look again, sir!—I intend to make you admire me a second time, in making you condescend to admire what God has here strewn around our path, for every one's admiration. See those *not*-serious little birds, hopping and chirping from bough to bough—"

"Ah!" again sighed George Blundell, "those little birds hop and chirp from bough to bough, with nature's full permission to be happy; for, Anny, all those beautiful little creatures, so frolicsome in the light of this May evening, are happy lovers, with their beloved ones—"

"And," said Anny, "they make love merrily, do they not? Can you see long faces on them? or can you call their accents dolorous?"—and to this little second appeal her stupid companion was so insensible that he only began to muster up one of his long-drawn sighs, when Anny and he, suddenly turning the elbow of the bank before alluded to, came almost in personal contact with Maurteen Maher, and she immediately accosted him—

"I wish you a good evening, Maurteen."

"*Cead mille beeachus!** my purty young lady, and I wish for you that seventy-seven May suns, like the pleasant sun of this blessed evening, may put the white blossom on the thorn-bush to give you pleasure, and open the flowers under your feet; and that to the last minute of the time I say, you may find it in your heart to be happy on a May-path."

"I thank you," said Anny, whole-laughing and half-crying, for old Maurteen's address had pathos in it. "I thank you heartily and sincerely, my good friend."

"Don't be thanking me at all, my blooming dai-

* A hundred thousand blessings.

sy; an ould man's words, be them ever so civil, are could and damp to the heart of the young, and the good, and the comely; but the kind salutation from the handsome lips of the young, and the good, and the comely, cheers the heart of the ould man, as if he sat forenent the breeze that blows from the rose-bush."

"On my word, though, *you* are a very gallant, poetical old man, and know how to flatter to some purpose."

"When the snow and the sleet falls, my purty crature, I feel the years heavy upon me; when the May shines out, they are not so weighty to my shouldhers; and the smiling of your cheerful face, blessing upon it, is as pleasant to me as the blighthest May-day."

"Positively, you will turn my head, good Father."

"No danger in the world of that, my purty crature; the poor head, God help it, thinks it's full of wisdom; but the heart is 'cuter, and makes a fool of it, for all that; ay, and your own handsome head will be going on turning to the side where your heart turns, this moment, if every word out of my mouth was a costly jewel."

"Why, you seem skilled in things, Maurteen."

"I'd make a wager of a silver sixpence, you know right well I'm spaking the sound sense, purty lady; and if the brave young gentleman who has won the prize, doesn't jump sky-high for his fortune, Mastha! he's an ouldher man nor I am."

As Maurteen Maher said this, he glanced arch-

ly at George Blundell, and, before the blush had passed from Anny's face, the angler cried out in the utmost ecstasy—"I'm in him!—I'm in him, your sowl!—I'm in him!"

Himself and the reel of his fishing-rod seemed to have been seized with a sudden frenzy; the latter whizzed violently, as it spun round and round, apparently of its own accord, and its handle revolved so rapidly that its motion was scarcely perceptible; and at the same instant Maurteen Maher ran eagerly along the bank of the river, his distended eyes fixed on the water; anon he stopped suddenly, hurried back the way he had come, then down again, then up again, every muscle of his face and person in twitching motion.

Anny, who had never before seen an angler engaged in the crisis of his sport, thought Maurteen mad—poetical she had before deemed him. Shortly after, she saw a fish spring many feet out of the water, near the opposite bank, and vaguely conjectured that there must be some sympathy between it and her late flatterer; for Maurteen jumped high, too, crying out in the greatest glee—

"*A sieve-maker!* by my conscience—*a sieve-maker*, every inch of him!"

George Blundell, occasionally an angler himself, knew more of those proceedings than did his fair mistress, and, to her increased astonishment, sympathized with them. Hurrying to his brother of the art, he snatched the landing-net out of his left hand, ran after him as he ran up and down, here and there—and with bent body and eager eye,

prepared to raise the trout from its native element. The poor victim of Maurteen's May-duke, while its strength continued equal to its fright, fluttered or darted through the river; gradually exhausted and passive, it opposed little resistance to its captor's cautious effort to wheel it nearer and nearer, till, at length, quite weary, and now lying close under him, it seemed to invite George Blundell to put forth the net.

"Be sure of what you are about!" commanded Maurteen, loudly. "Make no plunges at him!—Have a care there!—have a care, I bid ye!—Would he be off again!—troth, and I'll take care he shan't if I can help it—Now he comes—have a caution what you're at!—here he is, like a May-boy—dip the net—*dip* it under him, I say—no plunging at him—blur-an-ages! if I lose this sieve-maker by your botching, I could find it in my heart to strike you!—aisy now—aisy!—watch your work, now, I tell you!—now—now—that's it!"—and George Blundell succeeded in getting into the net he held, a fine trout of five pounds' weight.

Anny approached as Maurteen Maher flung the now lifeless fish on the grass;—"the beautiful creature! the poor innocent thing!" she cried. "Oh! how cruel is your sport, good man."

"The poor innocent thing you call him, my purty lady! I never met a greater rogue of a sieve-maker, since I first wetted a line. Did ye mind how he strove by main force to get me round that stump and make geomethries of me?"

"To get you round a stump, and make geometries of you?" asked Anny. "Now, that's something more abstruse than geometry itself, to poor me."

"He means, Anny," said George Blundell, "that the fish, by his doublings and twinings, had nearly fastened his line to the stump of a tree; which event, had it really occurred, must have caused the line to snap, and the trout to escape."

"I wish from my heart it had so happened," said Anny. "He calls it by a ridiculous kind of name, a sieve-maker, I think—I should suppose that means a large trout?"

"And a large trout it is, Anny. But I will explain our friend's terms to you, for I have learned the vocabulary of the neighbouring anglers. Once upon a time, a person who followed the trade of a sieve-maker, was remarkably fortunate in taking the largest fish on the river, and, since his immortal day, his professional name is given to all trouts of an unusual size."

"You tould me, purty lady," resumed Maurteen Maher, "that I have a cruel way of divarting myself; now, it's mighty plain to know that a good throut, with a big body and a little head, a broad back, and spots on his side as wide as half-crown pieces, makes very good food for poor Christians; and besides, little and big as they all are together, they were all bred and born and brought up in this river for people to ate; and, moreover, agin, all living things make out their life by ating one another, barring they'd be sheep or cows, or bastes

of that sort; and *we* ate *them* that ate only the grass; and, as harmless as you take that fish to be, there's more than two good hundred of flies in his craw this moment, and he swallowed them down alive as they sailed on the wather; and, hearken to me; he was like many of this world's rogues, enough wouldn't satisfy him, but he must be greedy for more—and so he thought to plundher me of my poor May-duke; never dhramin' that he'd swallow the book along with it."

"And these little things tied to your line, you call them flies?" said Anny.

"I call that tail-fly my desthroyer, purty lady; that middle one my tongue tickler; and the next to that agin, my snout-snapper."

Anny was engaged examining these oddly named baits, when, at a little distance down the river, where the rapid which rippled by them terminated in a deep, still pool, a heavy plunge was heard. A ragged young urchin had ascended a tree which overhung the water; the branch on which he would make an excursion snapped across, and headlong downwards he was precipitated, shrieking vigorously as he fell. George Blundell darted to the spot. On his arrival at the faithless tree, the boy was beating the water with his arms, gasping, and at intervals, still crying out piteously —suddenly, the water whirled round him, and he disappeared beneath it. George only waited to pull off his coat and shoes, and then dashed in. As he reached the still circling surface of the spot where the boy had sunk, the drowning creature

suddenly emerged close under him, and at once grappled with his self-destined preserver.

"Knock him from you, or ye're both lost!" shouted Maurteen Maher, from the bank immediately above them, whither he had followed, with the trembling Anny, and her hand-clapping, and loud-screaming attendant.

George Blundell was evidently conscious of his danger; he used every effort to disengage himself; he succeeded in freeing the wrist which had been particularly seized upon; but, as the desperate boy again was sinking, he locked his arms firmly around the young man's legs; and the sensation produced by the act was terrible to George Blundell. He felt himself dragged downwards to his death; he struggled with all his force, but in vain; the despairing grasp still clutched him, like a paralysis—he was sinking rapidly: a cry of horror escaped him—down, down he was dragged—he turned his look towards the bank; he caught a vague vision of Anny stretching her arms towards him; in another instant, he was lost to her view, and he did not hear the low gurgling shriek which escaped his hitherto coquetting mistress. The water of the deep pool for an instant quivered over him, and then settled into its usual placid stillness, as if lyingly innocent of the doom it had occasioned.

Scream after scream had burst from Anny, and now she became at once motionless and silent. The surface of the water was again broken; her lover appeared above it; she shouted out his

name; he looked hastily and wildly around him; he fixed his eyes more meaningly upon her; he waved his right hand towards her, and dived downwards, a second time disappearing, but now voluntarily, from her eyes.

Again she looked on the unbroken water without uttering a sound. George almost immediately re-emerged, squeezing tightly to him, with one arm, the stiffened body of the boy; while with the other he struck feebly for the bank. He reached it, however, safely. Old Maurteen Maher, bending down from its edge, lifted up, with difficulty, the prize which his young friend extended towards him. George himself wearily scrambled to the green sod, and there sunk down exhausted. Anny sprung to his side; knelt over him, rubbed his cold and languid hands, and his cold forehead, and pallid cheeks, nay, even kissed his forehead, and, laughing and crying together, called him "her own George, her own dear George," and, at last, "her own dear, dear, and dearest George," and asked him to live, and "to live for her sake;" and, as the young man became feebler, she repeated these expressions again and again in his ears; now unconsciously resting on her knee his drooping, and, indeed, his very dripping, head. He certainly did not hear her first words; but we half suspect that George Blundell imitated insensibility for a little time, after he comprehended her repetitions of them. At all events, he at last opened his eyes. Anny's little hand touched his cheeks, and her warm living tears dropped upon his chilled and

half-dead face. He turned his eyes to hers, and, in the idiom of a true young Irish lover, of his years and time, said—

"Ever and ever, blessed be this evening! for it hears Anny tell me that she loves me!"

Although blushing to the utmost tint of a blush, Anny bent her lips to his ear, and calling him brave, and benevolent, and charitable, and generous, with many other flattering epithets, repeated her assurances of affection.

George Blundell bounded to his feet, a much more happy man than he had been before he was half drowned. The birds he had so lately envied for their "hopping and chirping," and so forth, he now seemed to despise, by the superlative hopping and chirping, and so forth way, in which he walked home by the side of Anny Kennedy. We wish to give a somewhat more manly impression of the youth. He felt that he had successfully ventured his own life, to save that of a very humble and insignificant human creature, and this conviction did add elasticity to his limbs, and triumphant brightness to his eye.

Maurteen Maher, with the little tatterdemalion in his arms, now also reviving as well as he could, slowly advanced to the young pair, and addressed them:—

"May the good God give you his blessing this evening, young gentleman! you have a brave and a feeling heart—it will never pass from my mind that I saw you rising from the jaws of death, and then diving into them again, of your own accord,

because you would not save yourself alone, and lave this little crature to lie stiff on the bottom of the river. He is the son of a neighbour of mine —of one that's dearer than a neighbour; he left his home with me this evening, to play at my side; and I b'leve I forgot him, when I hooked the sieve-maker; and 'twould be a woful tale for me to tell, among the people that love him, that I left him a corpse under the wather;—I strolled down here, this evening, may be, to have an eye on you both, as well as to thry the luck o' the Green-Duke; and, may be, for my own reasons. I had a regard for one and the other of you, beforehand; but, from this evening out, I'll sthrive to be your friend agin' the world. I won't put the chill upon your young sperrits, by saying that there's a danger upon your road; but if mischief or ill-fortune ever overtakes you—listen to me:—at the very time you want a helpin' hand, then bring to your minds the ould Fisherman you met here this May-evening; and ye may have worse friends, or ye may have as thrue friends, but less able to do ye a sarvice, than Maurteen Maher, the Mayor of Windgap."

CHAPTER II.

In our first adventure before the awful world of literature, we attempted a description of the appearance, at some little distance, of a certain city in Ireland, as seen by two mystified lovers from a hill-side, early on a summer morning. We wonder, does any one now remember that sketch? we wonder, should we be able to try it, once again, merely, as before, from our recollections of a beloved place and prospect, even without recurrence to any former attempt? suppressing, at present, the name of the city, we wonder, will any one recognise in our second outline a likeness to our first? We wonder, too, have some ten long years, and not all of them very happy ones, dimmed, in memory's mirror, any of the chief features of our dear, dear scenery; and, above all things, we wonder, will any living creatures, but ourselves, go to the trouble of making any comparison on the subject? At all events, we hereby venture the experiment, changing, for certain reasons, our point of sight, yet in so unimportant a degree that no considerable omission of ours, should any such occur, can, on that account, be excused.

The two lovers, for whose particular gratification we made our first picture, sat, as has been observed, on a hill-side, which fully commanded a view of the reality sketched for them. We now ascend the brow of that hill, almost in a straight line from them; pass, by a stepping-stile, a wall which bounds it, and arrive on a road, which, running down precipitously before us, was, at the time of our present tale, although it is now superseded by a more level one, the only entrance from the metropolis into our city.

The river is seen, a depth below, its first appearance that of a darkened mirror; beyond, and high above it, towers an old feudal edifice, almost of princely structure, and in perfect preservation; but, upon this feature, nearly the first in our landscape, we cannot assure ourselves of proving perfectly true to an Irish tourist of the present day and hour; for we are told that people have been pulling down our venerable old castle, and rebuilding, or remodelling it in some new-fangled way or other; to our left, however, about fifty-five years ago, it elevates, over a high parapet wall, and from green and glady lawns higher still than that, its unique and sober-tinted front, flinging on the dim water the subdued reflections of its bulk, and of its surrounding foliage and grounds:—the gentle stream, stealing and disappearing to our right, round a grassy promontory, studded with beautiful trees. The placid smoothness of the river is formed, in this place, by a semicircular weir over which the water now comes towards you, first,

with a slight fall, then foaming, then less rudely broken, and, at last, subsiding into a glassy stillness, which reflects the sunny sky; but it is a second time obstructed by a barrier similar to the former one, and hurries out of your view in noise, bubble, and confusion. The blue-slated houses of the town are directly before the eye; the monotony of their appearance taken away by that of the luxuriant foliage, in which they seem embowered; and the elegant, though fantastic, cupola of the town-house, the steeple (now a taper spire) of the principal church, and the mitred and ivy-covered castles of ruined monasteries rising up over them, or among them, farther and peculiarly relieve the naked idea of a mere ordinary haunt of men. Our feudal building bounds, as has been said, our picture to the left; an old cathedral, with its adjacent mysterious round tower, both peering high above clumps of noble lime-trees, performs the same office to the right; and then the sloping meadow land rising to you from the near bank of the river, and, in the month of May, always adorned with hedge-rows of flowery thorn; the cultivated grounds ascending and extending on all sides of the valley, through which wanders our lovely river; and the frame-like line of hills, that surround almost the whole of the view, some near and distinct, some more remote and misty, and others, at a great distance, towering into bold blue mountains—this is our promised sketch, from memory. From treacherous memory—now fast beginning to refuse—(we are sure of it, after our

vague attempt,) to do justice, even a general justice, to those features of places where childhood has run riot and happy, which youth has observed and appreciated with poetical fondness, and which contain spots where moulder hearts of love and goodness, and gentleness—the hearts of old!—ah, dreamy life!—ah, dreamy, dreary, life!

But, to our business. The brow of this steep descent of road, upon which we have been standing, certainly commanded the most attractive view of our city. This is one eulogy for it. But every thing, in this imperfect world, has its advantages and its disadvantages; and we cannot praise our point of sight on another account. It was, in truth, a very uncomfortable spot to live upon, during the rougher seasons of the year. No matter from what point of the compass the wind blew, whether from the gloomy south, hurrying along with it the black rack, surcharged with vapour and rain; or from the boisterous north, whirling before it sleet, or hail, or frost; or from the pinching east, scattering the snow-flake; or from the south-west, sputtering forth a hurricane; it was all the same. Every blast was sure to avail itself of this passage into the town, and hence the place obtained the appellation of the Wind-gap; a name it still holds, and must retain, until the various currents of air cease to whistle, to howl, to puff and to bluster, from each nook and corner of the earth's atmosphere.

Uninviting, however, as the situation may appear, a range of thatched houses, stretched up and over the ascending road; and, at the time of which

we speak, in greater numbers than even at the present day. Why very sensible people should have chosen Wind-gap as an abode, we are not exactly aware. Perhaps, they were willing to set off the salubrity of their air, during some parts of the year, against its roughness during others. However, this may be, the inhabitants of Wind-gap were attached to their boisterous suburb; they even boasted that it conferred the rare gift of longevity; for if their blasts chilled, they also braced; and, indeed, the place could number more aged inhabitants than any other outlet, even of a city proverbial for "air without fog."

But the winter had now gone by; the spring too, had passed over, and midsummer was shedding its full effulgence on the good people of Wind-gap; and this latter is the time of the year at which we choose to make the reader better acquainted with the more important personages among them.

It was the eve of the twenty-fourth of June, about fifty-five years ago. All Irish readers pretty well know that it has been the practice, time immemorial, of the humbler classes, to kindle, upon this night, bonfires throughout the country. We have read many learned discussions touching the origin of this custom; notwithstanding which, and contrary, indeed, to the nature of the theme, or at least, of its object, we have been left as much in the dark as ever. Whether the lighting of bonfires on St. John's eve be a remnant of Pagan rites, by which our ancestors sacrificed to the palpable deity of the earth, the dispenser of light and heat; or

whether it be a custom of more recent origin, we honestly admit, we cannot say; nor shall we pause to submit any grave and erring surmises on the matter; the people themselves, who are the actual incendiaries on those occasions, can give no rational account of the meaning of what they do.

The unexplained practice is, while we write, lamentably fallen into decay, like many similar and even more intelligible ones—but the bonfires of the twenty-third of June, 1779, in and around our city, blazed merrily and in great numbers. To whatever point of the suburbs, or of the distant country, the citizen turned his glance; along the high road, or at the corner of cross roads, or in the bottoms of the remote valleys, or upon the bosoms of still more distant hills, columns of flame arose; and even in the streets of his town, the houses seemed red-hot, from the flaming upon them of vast fires, composed of furze, cows' horns, bones, tar-barrels, sugar-barrels, trunks or branches of trees, and all other combustibles that could not be called staple consumption for the thrifty domestic hearth of the place.

So, within and without, and far, far beyond our dear city, all was rejoicing glare; but to the honour of Wind-gap, be it recorded, the bonfire upon its height was brilliant beyond comparison; and honour, indeed, its inhabitants expected, and received, from the circumstance; a reflected glory proportioned to the magnificence of their conflagration. Many battles had been fought between "the boys of Wind-gap," (and the

elderly men were termed boys, along with the rest,) and other boys of other outlets, for necessary materials. In all such rencounters, the former had been victors, dragging up with shouts of victory, to the top-most point of their high ground, abundance of every thing required for a bonfire of gigantic dimensions.

The long wished-for evening fell. The pile was heaped, the brand was applied to it, and, as its flames shot up, "even into the shkie," young and old, man and woman, maid and widow, boy and girl, and child of each sex, sent after it a cloud-cleaving shout of exultation.

At this crisis of the mystical festivity, a fellow, uncouthly swathed from his neck to his heels in twisted straw ropes, wearing a ridiculous mask, and wielding a stick, with a puffed bladder tied to its extremity, flapped and banged his way through the truly motley crowd with as much agility as his cumbrous clothing would permit; indeed, he resembled a great half-tamed dancing bear. He was followed by another man of proportions as muscular as his own, fantastically dressed in female attire, also wearing a foolishly terrific mask, and armed in the same manner as his supposed protector. This absurd pair dashed through the shouting throng, dealing indiscriminately their blows on every head, which blows, like the words of a loudly babbling tongue, were more noisy than mischievous. The people, however, half of their own accord, ran here and there, pursued by their

two grotesque sergeants at arms, until the active police of Wind-gap had ranged them to their satisfaction. After a little time, order was restored, and the proceedings of the night went forward with official regularity.

At one side, where a line of temporary benches covered with green sods had been erected for the occasion, sat the more aged portion of the men of Wind-gap. Squatted on the ground below them, were ranged, dressed in their best high-cauled caps, and holiday garments, the as elderly females of the principality. Half-a-dozen of sycamore chairs, placed near to the benches, were occupied by as many gray-headed, sage-looking, and very old men; and opposite to those gathered the promiscuous group of every inferior age or degree (for age meant degree) of the dwellers of the place.

The foolish fellow armoured in straw, and the swaggering unfeminine would-be female, his companion, strided up and down, pummelling all who did not assume, at least, attitudes and faces of the required gravity; at the same time that their own grotesque tricks abundantly caused the loud merriment they affected to discountenance. The glare of the bonfire shot in between the seated old men and women and the confronting throngs, so that the faces of all glowed like heated metal, while their backs remained in black shadow.

The mumming fool in straw approached the old men seated on the chairs, flourished his stick with its appendage, struck the latter against the ground,

and attempted a few unwieldy movements. An aged man arose and came forward:—

"Neighbours all, both the ould and the young o' ye, listen to the words from my mouth. The fire is blazing for the midsummer; the eve of St. John's day is come round to us agin, praise be given above for the blessin' of another year; and we are behouldin' to choose a Mayor of Wind-gap, for the year that's afore us. Fifteen midsummer nights are come and gone since the same man first had the Mayorship of rule and sway over us; and to this hour he has kept the pace an' the Christian good-will inside our dours, and outside our thrasholds; quashing down scrimmages, and 'ructions, an' makin' a settlement of all our quarrels, an' keepin' us out of the law of the town below there, that might bring the *Meeroch** on us, if we had any thing to do with it. Honest neighbours, that hearken to me, my word goes for it, that a more honester or a more worshipful Mayor, nor Maurteen Maher, couldn't hould the sway on Wind-gap."

Like other reporters of popular oratory, we might have broken up this speech with many parenthetical cheers; for the spokesman and his subject are as much favourites of ours as any other public speaker ever has been, in the eyes of our brethren. We think, however, that we have better managed, and that we now show more real art by keeping our whole volley of hurrahs for the

* Ill-luck.

close of the oration; and by declaring, in strict truth, that the air was rent, after our friend sat down, with shouts of every calibre. The next instant, Maurteen Maher was re-elected mayor, as popes are sometimes chosen, by acclamation.

Maurteen had been seated on one of the sycamore chairs before spoken of; he now stood up; the oldest man of the assembly, one indeed almost bent double with age, came to his side, and placed a long osier wand, peeled white, in his worship's right hand.

"Will you make promise before the neighbours to be the honest, fair judge among us, and to dale out the thrue justice on Wind-gap hill?" queried his ancient installer.

"I'll do my duty, like a thrue honest man," answered Maurteen Maher.

"Neighbours, do ye make promise to be loyal and dutiful to your mayor?" demanded the same aged person of the assembled crowd.

"Loyal and dutiful," shouted all.

"The chair, the chair!" was now the cry.

A large, two-armed, wicker chair was brought forward. To its sides were nailed loops of leather; through these, strong poles were put: with much gravity of manner, Maurteen Maher took his seat, clutching in his right hand his long wand of office, and in the other a huge nosegay. His subjects seized the poles, mounted them on their shoulders, and, preceded by a piper and a fiddler, the Mayor of Wind-gap was thrice borne round the bonfire, to which, during his progress, many fagots of furze,

innumerable cows-horns, half the trunk of a goodly tree, and the entire skeleton of a horse, were added, for the purpose of conferring a kind of glory upon his inauguration, as well as of exciting the new and excelling shouts which attested it.

The mayor's chair was then placed on a turfy eminence raised above the grassy bench before described; a foaming brown pitcher of home-brewed ale was handed to him; he quaffed it, wishing the "sha-dhurth,"* to all around him; and then the vessel was passed on, of course after having been replenished, while each prayed a long reign for their newly, and indeed curiously elected civic magistrate.

Maurteen Maher arose, and, amidst all this half farcical, half serious scene, profound silence ensued.

"It is in the knowledge of all o' ye, neighbours," said he, "that since the first time ye made me Mayor of Wind-gap, 'tis my rule to chuse my council, that wid their help, I may give good advice to ye, on hard points; and the same council that I called the first year o' my Mayorship, I'll call this present year; and so, Shawn Leeach, and Gregory Roche, take your places."

Shawn Leeach, the very old man who, as it may be said, had sworn in the Mayor, and Gregory Roche, one not much younger, very demurely took their stations, the one at his right hand, the other at his left.

* Good health.

"Shawn Leeach and Gregory Roche," continued Maurteen, "ye are the Mayor's council for the year to come; and no man is to gainsay our judgments, upon the peril of being put out of good fellowship with his neighbours. Come before my face, Meehawl O'Moore."

The hitherto merely foolish fellow, in the case of straw, waddled towards his worship's chair.

"Meehawl O'Moore, I put you in the post of the Mayor's bailiff; I give you the power to disthrain and to make distress, under the ordher of the Mayor's Coort of Wind-gap;—are ye all content, and do ye know your own minds, this St. John's eve—that Meehawl O'Moore should have this place over ye, by ordher o' the Coort?"

It was curious that the boisterously inclined crowd wore really serious faces, while they affirmatively answered to this question.

"Well, then," rejoined Maurteen, "my hearty neighbours, let the dance go on, and the *Shannauchs* * be tould, and let the good Sheebeen be dhrunk, till the fire burns down, and the colloch's† hour comes. Meehawl O'Moore, keep the ring reg'lar; keep the gorsoons on their good beha'ver to the colleens; keep the *Sheebeen* rangin' its rounds in rason; let no one pass the gap widout payin' the towl;‡ if there's any unruly doin's or pickin' of quarrels, or any undacent conduct, bring the offendher before me; and so, neighbours, *Sha-dhurth*

* Agreeable gossip. † Old woman's hour.
‡ Toll;—toll for the bonfire.

to ye agin; and hearty and prosperous may we all be, man, woman, and child, ould and young, until St. John's eve comes round to us the next year."

The mayor took another willing draught; new cheers were given at the close of his harangue; more fagots and other combustibles were thrown on the fire; the piper and the fiddler, preceded and followed by the "boys and girls," adjourned to an adjacent level spot, under the clamorous direction of Meehawl O'Moore; and the dance quickly commenced with all the life and vigour for which Irish "boys and girls" are so justly celebrated.

Maurteen Maher possessed his osier arm-chair in quiet dignity; his council placed their lesser chairs at his right and at his left; the other old men, and all the old women, took their former stations; the *weenocks* sat in a ring round the blaze, and began plays suitable to their age; whilst over the whole Maurteen kept his eye of authority, ordaining order, encouraging amusement, talking "Shannachs," occasionally tasting his sheebeen; commanding that the same beverage should moisten the piper's chanter, rosin the fiddler's bow, give to the dancers' feet spirit for their pastime, and—(superfluous injunction) oil the well-practised tongues of the old women seated near his chair.

We end the chapter by insinuating that this local and absurd practice of electing a "Mayor

of Wind-gap," is only taken from the traditional authority of the place, (which, however, must not be questioned,) and can by no means apply generally to the peculiarities of the Irish people.

CHAPTER III.

MAURTEEN MAHER was a man between fifty and sixty; an old bachelor, and otherwise unburdened with family cares. During his whole life he had never devoted himself to any regular occupation, and yet he was decently independent by his cleverness in many ways. He could weave baskets, and *skeechs* and *kishes;* he cultivated a small garden of osiers, to supply him with materials for this branch of his handicraft; the sheebeen, brewed from malt of his drying, had a peculiar and highly relished flavour; he was an eminent ornamental thatcher; he could mend shoes, make fishing-nets, and fishing-flies and lines, and do an odd job as a carpenter; he could turn wooden trenchers, *thurgeens,* or caulcannon-pounders,* and such household furniture; and he professed many other branches of artisan accomplishments.

Yet to none of his avocations would he continuously or diligently devote himself; he took up all by fits and starts, and would often abandon them

* A mess of potatoes and other vegetables.

altogether, when the spring breeze invited him to the river-side, to pursue his favourite recreation of angling. Of this sport he was passionately fond; and in the successful pursuit of it, not one of his fishing brethren, who frequented the banks of the clear stream, which flowed through the valley, beneath his hill, could compete with Maurteen. His varied talents necessarily claimed respect, and Maurteen himself was by no means backward in assuming among his compeers an air of self-importance, proportioned to their admissions of his superiority. He possessed, however, a shrewd understanding, and, as the neighbours said, had "dacent manners and a handy tongue in his head." Such had been his admitted character from youth to manhood. As he advanced in years, he became still more looked up to. On all knotty points his opinion was consulted, and gradually became decisive of the matter at issue. This homage half spoiled Maurteen; a real dictatorship of manner grew upon him. He claimed the foremost place in all discussions, no matter upon what subject; domestic, as regarded Wind-gap, or foreign as regarded "the town below," and which he was pleased to consider as a mere appendage to his own dominions. Sometimes, his loud and oracular delivery of himself became ridiculed, but he looked superciliously on the scoffers, and turned his back on them, as quite unworthy of notice.

Maurteen monopolized, among other things, the management of bonfires, of May-bushes, of May-poles, and of all such illustrations of periodical fes-

tivities. Once, upon a St. John's eve, while the bonfire blazed brightly, partly as a frolic of the moment, and partly as a real acknowledgment of his great talents and efficient services, the "boys of the place" took him upon their shoulders, pranced under him round it, and appointed him to the mock office of Mayor. But Maurteen Maher's face was the only one which wore no smile on the occasion; and it was soon perceived that he took the freak more seriously than it had been intended.

His people were surprised to find, that after this night, he poked himself more actively than ever into all their disputes and slightest differences; arrogating, by virtue of his recent appointment, the exclusive right of deciding between them. And at first they indulged the usurpation "for the fun of the joke," at the same time being obliged to admit that Maurteen's verdicts often saved them from lawsuits in the town, and from internal feuds and bickerings. At the next bonfire, (but now as much by matter of course as to renew the frolic) he was re-installed in office;—and, for this occasion, his own hands had constructed an awful-looking wicker chair—the same in which, fifteen years after its manufacture, we have just seen him paraded round the fire. And it was now that he called upon the two most intelligent men of his neighbourhood to assist him with their advice in the dispensation of his authority, and these he styled "the Mayor's council." He also appointed a bailiff to carry his and their decrees into effect; and

thenceforward, without a sneer, or a witticism against him, even from the most witty, or the most sneering, Maurteen Maher obtained power, and preserved peace and good-will among his subjects. If a debt were owing from one to another, he arranged the time and manner of its payment; if the boundaries of a garden were disputed between two neighbours, a matter frequently occurring on an almost unclaimed common, where no fences, nor other lines of partition had previously been established, he called in "his council;" with them viewed the premises, and pointed out to each claimant his decreed portion. If trespass were committed by swine or cattle, he assessed the damages perpetrated—and all his judgments were at last acceded to, not only submissively, but pleasurably; the good people of Wind-gap agreeing among themselves that a man of clearer intellect, of more superior genius, or of more impartial justice, could not preside over their affairs; and it became a matter of course that his decisions were implicitly obeyed, much to the diminution of the fees of the real Mayor's office, legally established in the city about half-a-mile distant.

If fines or debts were to be recovered under his authority, and that payment was not forthcoming, he never failed to exact it. Meehaul O'Moore, his bailiff, was a ranting, rattling, laughing fellow, who obeyed the Mayor's orders for the joke's sake, careless of consequences. He would seize on some piece of household furniture, and carry it to his Worship the Mayor, who retained it until it was

redeemed. And another thing may have confirmed Maurteen in his authority, namely, that the whole community which he thus usurpingly governed, felt and acknowledged his general utility, in handicraft pursuits, much too convincingly, each in his own bosom, to offend even a public tyrant, if such Maurteen Maher could have been, at the risk of getting rid of the advantages resulting from his individual talents.

His worship had shown good discrimination in the choice of his council; Gregory Roche was the weaver of Wind-gap. Fifty-six years ago, the woman who neglected to commence the manufacture of the linen of her own household would have been deemed an unthrifty person. In every dwelling the buzz of the spinning-wheel was heard during the long winter nights; and it was the companion of the *vanithee* in the open air, outside the door, on a summer's evening. The weaver was, therefore, kept in good and respectable employment, and could live rather aristocratically. But, along with the consideration due to him, as an expert and cunning artist, Gregory Roche commanded deference as a man of superior manners and acquirements. He had read books, and was considered oracular on all grand historic points. Polemic literature he had also studied—we rather fear, however, only on one side; but he could relate "how King Harry had set up the Protestant religion—became the Pope of Room, (the Heavens be his bed!)—put his face totally agin the notion of letting the baste have more nor five wives

at a turn"—and he would add with a knowing wink—"that the one o' them was one too many." It was clear, according to Gregory's Church History, that "becase the bould King Henry the Aighth was a skhandle to Christian people, in regard o' the famale women, he gave to the sort o' clargy livin' in his time, ache a wife a-piece, and may be sometimes more, according to his own fancy, just that they shouldn't be bringing himself over the coals for his own doin's." While pointing to the ruined monasteries of which we have elsewhere spoken, in the town under his residence, Gregory Roche could speak, whether truly, or romancingly, we know not, of the different orders of regular brethren who once inhabited them—(after having built them by the way,) in their full glory; and he could expatiate on their former palmy state, compared with their present unheeded decay. Gregory's person was neat, and spruce, arrayed in snuff-coloured broad-cloth, a wig of three buckles, a well-brushed, three-cocked hat, and square-toed brogues. On all occasions, when the Mayor of Wind-gap sat recognised in full office, in his grand wicker chair, Gregory sat at his left hand; and it is worth adding, that he was the collector of "the dues" of the priest of his parish, as well as the Mayor's treasurer for whatever resulted from importunately assailing, in the persons of hundreds of ragged deputies, all passengers going and coming along the Wind-gap road, for contributions to the anniversaries of St. John's eve, May-day, and so forth.

The man sitting upon his worship's right hand, was, as has been said, the most aged man in the parish; the oldest of his neighbours, under him, scarcely remembered him with any other but a gray head; at present that head was white as snow, and his venerable hairs fell in great profusion on his shoulders. Hence the people called him Shawn Leeach, that is Gray Jack, although he had been christened John Morrison.—His years were said to be one hundred and ten, yet his intellect was strong, and his memory unfaded. He took great pride in walking to Mass on Sundays, the wrist of one hand clasped by the fingers of the other, and both resting upon the small of his back, accompanied by a great-grandson and two of his children, and a great-grand-daughter, of marriageable years. The image suggested to us by the appearance of this group has, we fear, often been used: yet, we will venture to say, that, to a poetic mind, our old friend and his companions might give the idea of blooming Spring, mature Summer, with its fruit, and hoary Winter, for the once, in company.

CHAPTER IV.

After having delivered the good-humoured injunctions we have last reported of him, Maurteen Maher sat in state, his council at either hand. His upper house (we take the liberty so to denominate all the remaining old men of Wind-gap) collected around him; and his lower house, in the persons of the ancient dames of his realm, squatted on the ground before him; and, however wide may appear the distinctions between these humble assemblies and those of the estates of the nation, yet was there some degree of similarity. It is needless to observe that Maurteen Maher, such as we have sketched his character, may answer sufficiently well to shadow forth some royal personage; compared with their contemporaries of the other sex, the old men were sententious and grave and imposing, and properly alive to the superiority of their nature, and should therefore be classed as the aristocracy of Wind-gap; and as for the old women, they so far resembled "the people's house," that, whatever they lacked of the hereditary sapience, the dignified demeanour, and the natural station claimed by the lords of the crea-

tion, they made up for, by an infinite disproportion of incessant gabble.

All these good folk sat fully within the influence of the bonfire's blaze; and while the boys and girls danced merrily away at some distance, the note of the music which set them capering came pleasantly to the ears of the old people. It should be noticed that, contrary to the usage in higher quarters, king, lords, and commons, sat within speaking distance of each other; all mingling in general shannauchs, except when two or three individuals chose to have a by-word. Nay, they quaffed their sheebeen in common; the same mug being sent from the throne to the lords, and from the lords to the commons, also, whenever the ancient throats of the last-named assembly became thirsty from smoking their pipes, or their tongues parched from clacking.

"What *pishe-rogue** story takes the rounds among ye, *shanav granvh?*"† asked his worship, the Mayor, addressing, in a condescending jocularity of tone, the seated matrons before him—"by the wagging of them heads of yours, and the long faces you're shaking at one another, I've a notion the discourse is runnin' on *Poochas*,‡ or on some *Duowls* tricks of a stormy night."

"Merry Easther to me, Mayor of Wind-gap," replied one of the dames, "but 'tisn't you I'd fan-

* Pishe-rogue, a tale of the supernatural.
† Shanav granvh, old women.
‡ Fairies.

cy to have for masther of my house; oh no—; och, by no manes, *a roon;* why, a poor woman couldn't blink her eye but you'd be at the bottom of the story."—

"And if I was goin' to make an *own-skuck** of myself, on that head, 'tisn't very clear to me I'd be troublesome to you, at all, Bridogue Mooney; I'd get a young colleen to comb my gray head, as the song says."—

"There is such combs as three-legged stools, to be found among the household furniture," smiled Gregory Roche.

"And the colleen that would take wid you would be at her last senses, though ye *are* the mayor itself," retorted Bridogue, "and she'd often be axing why you hadn't the *misnoch* † to thry your hand when you were worth the having; though, to spake the honest truth, I believe that time is beyant your own recollection, asthore."

"Och, Bridge, that wasn't always your mind; do you lose the thought of auld times? but there's no use either in fretting or in telling on you; what's to happen will happen; and I say, with a hearty good will, much good may do the man that made his own o' ye!—but ye're not sayin' amin to me, Ned Mooney?"—he suddenly asked of Bridogue's mate who sat near him. Ned expressively and waggishly shook his old pate, turned up his eyes, took the *dudeen* ‡ from between his teeth, and an-

* Fool. † Luck. ‡ Short pipe.

swered, "Och! I was a blessed bargain to her, praise be to God!—and having said this, he replaced his *dudeen*, and tightened his teeth and squeezed his lips on it.

"But what would ye all do, only that I'm a bachelor boy?" continued the mayor, "and have no wife, like a mill-stone round my neck, to keep me from minding your consarns: isn't it well for ye that I happen to hould the same belief wid the crature in the cart, as ye all know, 'tis in the ballad,"—and the Mayor sang forth:—

"There was a victim in a cart
A goin' to be hanged;
When his reprief came from the King
The cart and crowd did stand:
But he must either take a wife
Or be content to die.
"'Och! why, then, should I keep my life?'
The victim did reply:
'There's people here from every place,
Why should I spile their sport?
The bargain's hard in either case—
But come! drive on the cart.'"

To this not very elegant version of a not very original witticism, there was the contribution of what the author of "The Man of Refinement" considers a vulgar evidence of the feelings of human nature; namely, a laugh; accompanied by what is deemed not out of the way, in the boxes of the Italian Opera, namely, clapping of hands.

"Bridogue," resumed the Mayor, "ye know ye were a comely crature, in the time we spake of, and used to dance, 'cover the buckle,' so as to take

the light out of my eyes; and ye know, more betoken, that it's not my own fault that I'm a lone man, but because Ned Mooney was a claner boy; howsomever, as I said afore, or something like it, a pottle of frettin' doesn't sell for a groat."

Med Mooney puffed forth a volume of smoke, which he had been inhaling during the Mayor's last speech, and half laughed and half whispered, into his sovereign's ear, "Mostha! bud ye were born with a silver spoon in ye're mouth to be quit of her!"

"Well, Bridogue," the Mayor went on, "tell us what ye were colloguing about; for our own discourse here is reeled off to the bare spindle."

"When ye said we were tellin' of duowl's doin's, Mayor of Wind-gap," answered Bridogue, "the guess ye made was almost the right one; we war talkin' about The Strange Man o' the Inch," she added, in a low confidential and now serious voice, to which all who heard her, except Maurteen, responded with looks of almost frightened attention.

"And if I didn't care much what I was sayin', I'd lay a wager you were givin' him a nice, purty character?" smiled the Mayor, with seeming indifference.

"Och! in honest truth, a good name is a bright jewel," remarked Bridge, unconsciously half-quoting Shakspeare, "and 'twould be the same pity to cock it up in the cap of the strange man o' the Inch; and for the best o' rasons in the world, because he never cared for it, his own self."

"And what's ye're own notion about him, a-vanithee?"

"Sence ye have the likin' to hear to it, I'll rehearse it for you, what our notion is. We were a a sayin' that, if ever there was a cloven-hoofed duowl, that pawned himself on people for a dacent-looking man—(though he *has* a little halt in his gait, too,)—and sich things happen oftentimes, they say—*the* sthrange man o' the Inch is just that sort of a body."

"'Twas well I didn't pass my word for your civility to him, Bridogue."

"Och ay; and we were sayin' no more nor what his doin's give the warrant for; and there's more nor that; I'll make my words good agin him, or I'll give you lave and license to say I haven't such a thing at all as a tongue behind my teeth."

"Whatever way the story turns up, the Mayor won't say that o' ye, any how," remarked the experienced Ned Mooney; "for if he took his oath of it on the mass book, there's another one livin' in Wind-gap could tell him what would give him his doubts for all that."

"My speech is to pleasure the Mayor, Ned Mooney."

"Faith, and sure I don't begrudge it to him; there will be enough left for us all."—Ned Mooney was a laughing philosopher, and jested with his misfortunes.

"Well, Bridogue," resumed the Mayor, "we are

longin' to know the rason why ye put hoofs on the strange man o' the Inch."

Bridogue pulled down, with a sudden jerk, her petticoats over her shins; tucked all her clothes under her; shifted her position till she was poised to her satisfaction; stretched her hands towards the blaze and rubbed them well together; and smacked her lips, and protruded her chin towards the Mayor. Amongst her sister dames, similar movements were made to fix themselves comfortably and lastingly in their sitting positions; most of the old men rested their chins upon their sticks, and bent themselves towards her, half smiling, yet staring inquisitively; the pipes of male and female were hastily replenished and vigorously relighted, as if to lay in sea-storage for a long and important voyage of gossip; and Bridogue then went on with her shannauchs.

"Isn't it a thing known to every one hark-to me, that ever sence the doin's that happened inin' there, down at the Inch, now more nor twenty years agone, no cratur, that was a livin' Christhen at all, would go to live in that ould house;—becase the sperrit o' the lady that died in it, and the sperrit o' the young man, through whose manes the life left her, goes thrampaging through the rooms, by night; screeching and sthruggling most frightful for to hear. Isn't that thrue for me, I'd be glad to larn?"

This question, though put generally was, after

a pause, replied to only by Gregory Roche. "I b'lieve," he said, "there's no one you might ask about that house could tell you more of it nor our Mayor his own self."

"To be sure I could say something of it," observed the Mayor, with a half laughing, unsuperstitious, superior kind of expression, "but I'll keep my knowledge to myself, Gregory Roche; and in the main time, for the rason you are not tongue-tied, ye can tell the neighbours what happened to us both, the night we went to the Inch."

"I often tould all that came to my knowing about that night; so that 'twould be no story to any one," answered Gregory; and this was literally true; there were none present who had not heard of the visit paid by the Mayor and his younger council to the abominated house of the Inch; and yet such is the love of the marvellous, among people who purposely set themselves down to listen to a recital of it, that every voice cried out either that the circumstance had not been fully related, or that it had been quite forgotten: and an *encore* was loudly called for. A first singer could not have been more obliged than was Gregory Roche for the request made of him.

"Well, neighbours, well; 'twouldn't be a mannerly turn to say the No to ye, and so spile the discoorse, when we are all sociable together of a St. John's eve. There's never a one here that's not ould enough to bring to mind when the house

at the Inch was shut up, and the rason why its dours and windows were all boulted and barred."

"Och! and sure we do remember it well," interrupted Bridogue Mooney, snatching the narrative from Gregory's mouth, with as much eagerness as a starving dog might seize a bone from the jaws of another; "myself has the whole story on the tip o' my tongue."

"Then tell it, Bridogue, in St. John's name," said the Mayor,—"you'll sleep the asier for it, and poor Ned will pass the night quieter; besides, you're so handy at the speech, Bridogue; that ye'll be at the end of your journey before Gregory could get to the first turnpike."

Bridogue gave her person a pert move, while Gregory smiled; but at the bottom of his appearance of complaisance, there was a gravelly sediment. The *raconteuse* started forward on her narrative, with an avidity that fully bore out the Mayor's assertion of her professional capacity; and taking the liberty to recur to our elegant simile of the rifled bone, her haste was doubled, at once, to satisfy her own appetite, and prevent the possibility of a reprisal. Yet, first-rate as was esteemed Bridogue's gossiping talent, she committed, to our taste, so many digressions from the main point—such a scaling of the genealogical tree of every creature mentioned in her *Shannauchs*—that we will endeavour to condense her matter, according to our own notions of the requisite compactness of story-telling.

The garrulous old body has fixed the period of her tale at twenty-one years, or thereabouts, previous to the time of its relation. At that epoch it was known to "all the world [the world of Windgap we presume she meant,] that ould Harry Stokesbury," the proprietor of the house at the Inch, and of considerable property beside, "had been as wicked a sinner in his time as ever broke the commandments,"—that is, he had led a self-indulging, irregular life. It was equally well known that, like all *rouës*, he had been an unreasoning tyrant to his family; and that when, from the inroads made on his constitution by excesses, as well as by years, he became no longer able to pursue his former courses, he continued just as intolerant at home, as if he had been a voluntary ascetic.

To his only son, the "young Harry Stokesbury," now a man, in the prime of youthful vigour, and who showed every propensity to follow the example given him by his sire, he was, with a most ungenerous want of sympathy, particularly severe and oppressive; fuming, and cursing, and raving at his imitator's follies and crimes. But the younger Harry, laughing at the idea that his father, the most thorough-going rake of his own day, should turn moralist upon him, merely in spite that his descendant could eclipse him, took little heed of the parental lectures thus lavished upon him; in fact, it was visible to every one that Henry the second

had resolved to prove himself "a chip of the old block," whatever the old block itself might choose to think about the matter. But the "ould fellow" began to keep a firmer gripe of his money than he had hitherto done: "Like the dog in the manger," thought his son, "he can't use it himself, and won't give it to those who can." Young Stokesbury soon wanted, in fact, the means of pursuing what he called his pleasures; in consequence of unsatisfactory payments, people began to refuse him new credit, and to become troublesome to him about old scores. He sent them all to his father (after first sending them all to the devil,—"and there's little in the difference," remarked young Harry to himself.) "Ould Harry" ordered them, however, to be chased off his premises; and some, who insisted strongly on their claims, were compelled, in consequence, to fight their way to the high-road, through two or three house-dogs, and four or five servants—glad to escape without very material personal injury.

"The young fellow" inherited his father's passionate temper, as well as his taste for pleasant pursuits; it was well known, indeed, that, in the first-mentioned instance, he even excelled his prototype; his torrent-like nature becoming quite turbulent and destructive when attempted to be curbed in its career. He demanded money from "the ould fellow," but not only got none, but was met with showers of oaths and vituperation. "The

young fellow" recriminated as well as he knew how: and at the scenes of altercation which took place between them, and at the sound of their maniac voices, rising high in mutual and unbridled passion, every soul under the same roof with them shuddered.

"Well, (and here the reader must imagine Bridogue piquantly smacking her lips) 'the young fellow' seized whatever he could lay hands upon, either in the shape of money, or of articles convertible into money, and rioted away as long as the supplies, so gained, lasted; but long they did not last, and he was again in necessity; and another fearful contention took place between him and his unhappy parent; and another; and many others; (Bridogue's manner of relating these facts was solemn) until at their last interview, the father struck the son, and the son raised his sinewy arm, and felled his father to his foot; and from that day, until he got an unchristian grave under the waters of the sea, a curse fell upon and followed young Harry Stokesbury; nor did the listeners of Windgap see any thing extraordinary in this fact; for, to their primitive hearts, it seemed an immeasurable sin, that, even with provocation, the child should commit outrage on the person of the father."

It was reported at the time, as Bridogue asserted, that "the young fellow," after having fled the house, to escape death at the hands of his father,

who, in his rage, armed himself with a weapon to inflict it, became very sorry for his abominable act; and, when he had cooled, was penitent, and did all in his power to make peace at home. But "the ould fellow" would never set his eyes upon him; and at his dying hour left him nothing but his curse.

Still, according to our narrator, and, indeed, the general credence of the country, the young man was as much to be pitied as blamed. To be sure, no one could help calling him wild, and wayward, and passionate; nor was it any very great wonder that he felt inclined to tread in the paths that had been well beaten for him by his father; yet, many good Christians said that he was affectionate and generous, and Bridge insisted that to those below him, who wanted and claimed his assistance, he had shown a liberality so extreme, that it almost atoned, in the world's eye, for his youthful indiscretions: she particularly instanced the following case.

While yet but a boy, he discovered a near relation of his deceased mother in the most abject distress. This person he instantly snatched from penury, called him his brother, and, at his intercession, the elder Stokesbury consented to receive the new comer as an inmate of his family. The lad was educated along with young Harry; ate with him; was clothed as well; sported with him; in fact, was treated, in every respect, as a brother, indeed.

The characters and even appearance and manners of the two youths were very dissimilar. Young Harry was a strong-featured, yet fine-featured boy, with superabundant spirit; his poor cousin, so cherished, was as handsome, but mild-looking, and with the expression of even a want of spirit upon his countenance; yet, Harry seemed to love him better because of this contrariety; it made him more positively the protector and patron of his timid relation.

"But smooth water runs deep, and the duowl lies at the bottom of it," was Bridogue's sage commentary on this soft-seeming individual. Young Henry Stokesbury soon experienced cause to repent that he had ever rescued the lad from starvation. Old Stokesbury had under his roof a ward, an interesting young girl. Her dower, when she arrived at a disposable age, was to be a large one, and her father had willed that she should espouse her guardian's son, on the promise that the guardian consented to the match. It was said that the young man loved most enthusiastically his betrothed bride; and no wonder that he should; for she was generally allowed to be beautiful; and, like the lamb, even too mild and gentle: the very opposite indeed, as was his cousin, to her intended husband.

Shortly after the deadly feud with his father, young Harry left his native place, and went, no one knew whither. Three months after, his de-

testing parent died. It was generally supposed that, notwithstanding his father's will, and even curse, the disinherited heir would immediately return home to survey his chances of fortune. But, twelve months elapsed before Harry's re-appearance at the house of Inch, and then his visit was known by its consequences.

During his absence, it had become whispered about that the person whom, from early boyhood, he had cherished, had behaved most foully and treacherously to him; that he had inherited young Harry's paternal property; and that, for the accomplishment of his views, he had kept up the father's rage against the son, and that, therefore, the old man's curse had been his only legacy to his only child; but, worse than all this, rumour now told that the traitor was, at Harry's return, the husband of the beautiful and wealthy ward of Old Stokesbury.

As evidence to a jury, perhaps there might have been nothing certainly proved on these points, but appearances bore out suspicions. The usurper lived in the Inch-House, and the fair young girl lived there with him, and the closest observers could only conclude that they were man and wife.

Upon a dark night, the house was attacked by a band of armed men, broken into, and at once given up to pillage. Harry Stokesbury's treacherous cousin fell, covered with wounds, inflicted by

Harry's own avenging hand, near to the bed, on which lay his faithless mistress—a shrieking witness of this, perhaps, rightful retribution. The general story went, that she had become a mother only a few days before, and that, when the terrible young Harry, after his sanguinary deed, turned to her to reproach her with her infidelity, he found that, with her last, long scream, her young spirit had passed away.

While yet grimly standing over the bleeding and senseless victim of his revenge, he was seized upon and conveyed to prison. The authorities of the neighbouring town had received private intimation of the intended attack on the house at the Inch, and, although they had been too officially precautious, or perhaps lazy, to anticipate it, they at last sent overpowering numbers, to ensure to the law vengeance upon the law's aggressors.

The now only living Harry Stokesbury, arrested on the very scene of his crime, was tried at the bar of justice, and condemned to death. Yet, tremendous as had been the result of his rage, the provocations to it, according to general report, were mercifully taken into account, and eventually, he was only transported from his country;—transported from it, as soon appeared, never to reach the shores of another; for authentic intelligence reached Ireland that the vessel in which he sailed, had foundered in open sea, and that all on board had perished.

Although, as the savage youth stood over the stiffening body of his relation, he had thought him dead, his victim lived on; and after twenty years and upwards, still continued to be a breathing man, upon the very evening of Bridogue's narrative; "lading, to be sure," added Bridogue, "a very quiet life, in the town at our feet—but who can forget, for all that, his airly villany?"

CHAPTER V.

THE house at the Inch, thus marked by the assertions of Bridogue, and the assent of her neighbours, who, by the way, were the nearest populous community to it, as the scene of a hideous tragedy, had indeed been shut up and unoccupied for many years, until within the last three months, when it was taken by the object of the old woman's present animadversions. Bridogue closed her story with this remark:—

"An' it's a thruth, afore ye all, that no right body would ever venter to go live in such a place, where the sperrits of Harry Stokesbury and the young woman, that died there, haunt the place the whole night long; an' if 'twas a thing," she added, "that the house at the Inch had never been a place of ill luck, or *Meerooh*, both the one and the other, were in it now, for it covered the head of the wickedest man the world ever gave birth to; not batrin' ould Harry Stokesbury, or even young Harry himself."

We have before surmised that all the assembled sages of Wind-gap, male and female, were well

acquainted, previous to this night, with the story of Harry Stokesbury; but Bridogue was peculiarly remarkable for her powers of newly arranging and combining the incidents of a tale, no matter how often she repeated it; so that, even prolix as she had proved in the present instance, none of her auditors seemed fatigued; on the contrary, throughout her narrative, and most emphatically at its conclusion, the old dame was greeted with various exclamations of wonder, pleasure and applause; all which testimonies of her talents she accepted as matters of course.

One only of her auditors wore a face of indifference on the occasion, and even ostentatiously displayed it; and this was Ned Mooney, the good dame's spouse, who quietly contented himself with ejaculating, "Thanks be to the blessed St. John, she has done!" It need not be observed, that this circumstance went most bitterly to Bridogue's heart; want of interest in any one is certainly the keenest offence the story-teller can receive; what must it be, when it comes from one's own husband?

Different remarks circulated among the old people, upon the matter under discussion; until at length it was recollected that Gregory Rothe had been interrupted in his modest attempt to relate an anecdote, connected with the house at the Inch; and he was now requested, by all, to resume. It was not, however, an easy matter to prevail on the weaver of Wind-gap to take up the snapped threads of his intellectual loom; another artist had

been publicly preferred to himself. But the Mayor knew the weak point of the man, and whispered him, that what had occurred, was only according to "good manners;" that, merely through gallantry, women must have their way, all the world over; that he was assured, Gregory Roche, whom every body regarded, as the "pathern of Wind-gap, in regard of mannerly conduct," would not, for the first time in his life, be forgetful of "dacent behaver." Gregory was conciliated; and, when all were again fixed in attitudes of attention, the "pathern of Wind-gap" began his anecdote.

"All that the plasing vanithee, Misthress Mooney by name, tould to ye, neighbours, was a thrue story, and well rehersed over. Every body said, after the house at the Inch was shut up, that sthrange cries used to be hard there in the night time, and sthrange lights seen in the upper windies. Misthress Mooney related for you that 'tis more nor twenty years sence the young woman died there; by coorse of nature, the Mayor of Wind-gap and myself were younger people that day than we are now at the present time, forenent ye; we had no Mayor at all over us then, more be token; Maurteen Maher was only Maurteen Maher, in them days. Well; Maurteen brought me down by the river-side a fishing, of a very fine evening, moreover, that would tempt any one to take a slope to himself by the green bank, where the flowers were blooming to the eye-sight. Ye all know, neighbours, that the house at the Inch is

near to the wather's side. We were a comming our way home, and now then we stopped in our discoorse, and turned our looks to the house, for we bethought ourselves of the story that was going; it was a good two hours after the night fall.

"Says Maurteen Maher, to me, (remember he was only Maurteen Maher at that time, neighbours, or I'd call him the Mayor, to be mannerly)—'Gregory,' says he to me, 'as sure as the fishing-rod is in my hand, I see light in the top windy of the place'—and neighbours all, I looked myself, and light there was. We held our tongues for awhile, like people sthruck with amaze; till, at last, says Maurteen to me agin, 'Gregory, I'll see what's in the house, if 'twas the Duoul runnin' with his lantern through it; will you come with me?'

"No, Maurteen, no, I made answer to him; the heavens be our safeguard, we shouldn't meddle or make with things of that sort.

"'Come near to the house, Gregory Roche,'" Maurteen said to me. Myself demurred, good neighbours; myself demurred to Maurteen Maher; but he took me by the arm, and by main force brought me with him; for he was a sthronger boy nor I was.

"We got very near to the house; the light of the windies blazed brighter and brighter; and we hard, ay, as positive sure as I'm a livin' sowl, this St. John's eve, and as sure as the saint's good fire is burnin' before me, and as sure as ye are all hearkenin' to me, we hard a pitiful, doleful screech, that stopt us as if we were shot; 'twas

like the screech of a woman in her sorest trouble; neighbours, neighbours, it was; only more dolefuller, by far, by far."

Gregory Roche here paused. It was not without intention that, with due solemnity of voice, shaking of his head, and impressive mysteriousness of visage, he had managed to bring his story to a certain pitch of interest. To measure the success of his art, therefore, Gregory paused; and anon he grew pleased with his observations; the usual marks of deep sympathy with the narrator were fully displayed. Towards Maurteen Maher, indeed, Gregory did not venture to direct his eye; for, as he had sometimes experienced before, he feared to find on the Mayor's lip a half waggish smile; nor would he have been at present disappointed in his apprehensions; tho' perhaps his worship was only amused with his council's rhetorical decorations.

"Neighbours, neighbours," resumed Gregory, not yet quite satisfied with the strong impression he had made; "Maurteen Maher that was, and the Mayor that is, will bear me out in what I say; it was indeed, it was a very mournful screech we heard."

"You're tellin' the story mighty well, Gregory Roche," said the Mayor, "'twas plain to know that a livin' Christhin couldn't baul out that way, through his teeth, if they made a King of England of him."

"No, neighbours, no; not a livin' Christhin sowl would screech that a way.

"'Come into the house, Gregory Roche,'" says Maurteen Maher, to myself, very wickedly.

"Into the house is it, Maurteen Maher?"—I made answer to him; and I shook my finger at him, the way I now shake it, neighbours. I did—I shook my finger at him.

"No, Maurteen Maher, says I, I will not darken the door-stone of that house; 'tis no place for honest, livin' people, says I to him.

"'I'll go by myself then,'" says Maurteen Maher, pushing me away from him. Didn't ye push me from you, Mayor of Wind-gap, that was Maurteen Maher then? didn't you?"

"I did in good troth," answered his worship, smiling quietly.

"Take my advice, says I to him, and I shook my finger at him again; take my counsel and don't enter there; lave the dead to their doom; to their doom, says I. 'I will go in, says Maurteen Maher, over again.' Neighbours, I was the image of one thunderstruck, by rason of his bouldness: there was no fear upon him: 'here is the fish and the fishing-rod,' says he, to myself—'it would be a pity to have them good throuts lost;' ay, indeed neighbours, all he seemed to think about was the losin' of the throuts. 'If they brake my bones, and that I can't come back to you,' says Maurteen, 'If I *don't* come back to you, in an hour's time, go home, Gregory Roche; go your ways home, and send the throuts to Mr. Kelsham at the gazebo; I promised them to him, and, dead or alive, I'll keep my word; send them to him, Gregory

Roche; and make sale of this fishing-rod, and of every thing you'll find in my house, and give the money to the poor, for the good o' my soul.'

"I was amazed beyant the world, neighbours; I was like unto a body turned into a pillar of salt, after a manner; and while I was in this sort o' way, Maurteen Maher left me. He staid away near to an hour; and he came back with a sanious face, I pledge myself to ye, but what he seen he never tould of."

"Would ye have my face turn round to my back, Gregory, or would ye have me be withered into a * sthagown for letting my tongue run away with my brains?"

Gregory Roche was fully satisfied at perceiving that his contribution to the wonders of the night was well received, quite as well, indeed, as the more lengthened one of Bridogue Mooney, and, therefore, it did not come into his head to reply to the Mayor's last observation. Many comments and surmises followed, which we will pass over, only noticing the more material topics.

"It was a throe remark for Bridge Mooney to make," said a woman with a palsied head, every shake of which threw a very effective hiatus into her speech, "'tis mighty thrue for Bridogue Mooney to say that no right body would go to live in such a house as the house at the Inch."

"Right body, inagh!" cried Bridge, smartly, "He's no right body, as sure as I'am an auld sinner, he is not. I'm tould he's mighty ill-favoured

* Sthagown, a frost-bitten potato.

to look on, and elderly into the bargain; and if he hadn't witchcraft on his side, is it to be believed that an auld ugly offender of a man, 'ud be able to over persuade so many young creatures?"

"I believe, beyant any doubt," observed one of the old men of the company, "that such sin and shkandle was never known to happen in a neighbourhood as fell upon the country round the Inch house, since the sthrange man came to live there."

"There was never the like known in the world wide," answered Bridogue—"and if he was a sightly young blade, that 'ud be plasing to the eye, and carried a coaxin' smile upon the lips, and had a sugary tongue in his head, there wouldn't be half the surprise; but take my word over again for it, it's by witchcraft, and witchcraft alone, he comes round them. Isn't Nelly Darcy, the smith's daughter, ashamed to shew her head? isn't there Doran's crature of a colleen, not over sixteen years auld, turned from the door by her own father and mother? and isn't there Mahony's wife, that wint by the name of purty Peggy, afore Tim Mahony brought her home.—(Tim Mahony, ye know, keeps the sign of the "Tumblers" at the cross roads, beyant the Inch house) and wasn't she sent to her father, by rason of her husband's displeasure? and ochone! ochone!" continued Bridge, pathetically, "the shkandle is brought on us all, on account of the unsightly auld man o' the Inch! I tell ye, onst for all, he gives draughts to us all, some way or other."

"There's quare things done of a certain," said auld Daddy Leeach, "every body can spake of what the shoulin' *Macohes** wishes upon young crathurs, by manes of bewitched pins, and herbs, and dhrinks, sweet and plasing to the mouth, though bitter for the heart, and bad for the poor sowl; and I knew in my time, sthrange things to be used for the makin' of the love draughts. They say that the young ones of them *fawlhoguest* that flies through the air from the morning till the night, taken from the nest afore their feathers grows, and the nest they're found in taken at the same time—they say that if the bird, and nest, and all is biled up together for the wicked purpose, the broth it makes will force a girl to run after a boy, or a boy to run after a girl, for the mere love, the world over."

"Is it the swallows ye made mention of, Shawn Leeach," asked another very old man near him.

"Ay, in good thruth, Meehawl—'twas about them swallows, the youngest of 'em, I mane, that I made mention."

"And faiks," resumed Meehowl, "the rason I put the question to ye, on that head, is this; very airly of a hazy morning, I was passin' by the house at the Inch—the Lord stand between us and all harm," and here the narrator piously crossed himself: "when what should I see, lookin' towards the house, but the sthrange man himself, standin'

* Wandering beggars. † Swallows.

outside of a windy, and he was pullin' down a lowsy-low's nest."

"And ye seen him doin' that, Meehowl?" then it's likely enough that Bridogue Mooney is right in her sayin'."

"I'll stand up for my sayin';" replied Bridge Mooney; "he puts the charms on us, howsomever he finds manes to do it."

"I'll tell ye what I hard of them swallows, neighbours," said Daddy Leech: "them swallows and them birds, too, that goes by the name o' willy wegtails, I'm could for sattain has three drops o' the Devil's blood in them, Lord be good to us."

"'Tis often and often I took notice of both kinds of them birds, the *foulhogues*, and the *spiddogue coppel;* the spiddogue coppel is never known to sing his varse of a song, only when the day is bither could, and dripping wet; and then it's a mournful thing to hear him, and to look at him, standin' on a could wet stone, by the road-side, and by the river-side, liltin' his bit of a *crooncaun*, and lookin' about him so 'cute, and waggin' his long tail, for all the world as if he gloried in the dark rainy-day, that puts a cloud over the mind of all Christhin cratures; and them swallows, agin, they skim about, from the risin' to the settin' of the sun, and they never put foot to the ground like our own birds; but, when the storms is comin' to vex the earth, they all get in a row, together, upon an ould wall, or on the the top of a body's house, and they sing, and they sing, all of them at once, and as loud as ever they can, makin' merry at the

doleful change, that's comin' on, and that they *know* is comin' on, more be-token, better nor the people themselves; and moreover there's not one among us can tell how they come here to Windgap, or where they come from, or where in the world they go to in the winter-time; and I often hard it said as well as our neighbour, Shawn Leeach, that the three dhrops o' the Devil's blood is in them, and in the willy-wag tails."

These comments on the recipe for the manufacture of love powders; the undeniable fact that the strange man at the Inch had been seen in the act of pulling down swallows' nests; his morose and yet popular character (in a certain way;) his want of personal recommendation, and yet his personal success; all this put together, left our lords and commons of Windgap in little doubt as to the means by which his indescribable triumphs had been won. Nor, indeed, must we much wonder at the conclusion to which our good folks have arrived; for, according to their primitive ideas, nothing but witchcraft could account for the Turk-like sway of their abhorred neighbour; the want of good conduction any one of the young girls of their community being looked upon as a kind of mysterious visitation.

It was, however, mentioned that, sometimes when by chance his charms ceased to influence, the strange man of the Inch did not stop short of secondary, human means. A tale of violence was added, according to which the precincts of the garden of the Inch-house was looked upon as banned

and unholy ground, although the hero had been disguised beyond the possibility of recognition. On all hands, it was admitted that the strange man o' the Inch had "a sort of look, a baneful, baleful look, which, if it once rested on a comely girl of any rank, ensured her eventual perdition, or was to be averted only by a miracle. In fact, Bridoigus Mooney clearly made out her propositida, which had opened the conference round the bonfire, namely, that, "the strange man o' the Inch was a cloven hoofed duowl, passin' himself for a decent elderly man."

We extract from bye conversations of our good friends of Wind-gap some assertions that did not tend to set up the character of the subject of their *shannauchs*. It was vouched that the only person known to live with him was a wrinkled haggard woman; and yet many figures were seen after twilight going to the house and coming from it; and at hours of the night, when well conducted people ought to be at rest, that uproarious revelling was known to continue under his roof till day-break. "Boys of the neighbourhood" had once been venturous enough, during one of these commotions, to approach the premises. It was very dark, and they were moving stealthily onward, when suddenly they heard a fearful, hellish shout; the lights, they had previously seen so vivid within the house, became extinguished; before they had time to advance, or recede, each in his consternation was seized, as all averred, by a "horned Divil," for the group was young and strong, and

could not otherwise have been so overcome; and, thus mastered, they were urged supernaturally along, "in sich a hurry, that they hadn't time to bless themselves;" until they arrived at the river's bank, which, as has been mentioned, flowed near the house; and into the river they were plunged, and out of the river they barely escaped, although good swimmers, with the wise resolution never again to oppose earthly prowess to fiendish agency.

"Be him a sinful Christin, bought and sould, or be him a duowl in earnest, may the heavens keep him from our road," ejaculated Bridogue Mooney.

"Amin, and amin over agin, gossip," assented the dame, with the pendulating head; "from evil doins' and evil doers, the Lord deliver us!"

A rather violent stir here took place, among the dancers at a little distance; and six or eight stout young fellows, heralded by the man of straw, and his Herculean help-mate, dragged towards the Mayor's chair two individuals wearing large outside coats, and broad-brimmed hats. As the parties confronted the judgment-seat, hat and cloak were torn from the person of the foremost culprit; and, almost in the middle of the gossip, which had occupied itself about him, "the sthrange man o' the Inch" stood fully in view. His *nom de guerre* was shouted by more than one voice, and immediately those who had held him loosed their grasp; and he stood in the blaze of the fire, laughing loudly at the ludicrous confusion which his presence created.

Among the old women, there ensued a hidious discord of screams, and they tumbled over each other, in their hasty, though not successful, attempt to avoid the neighbourhood of one whom they themselves had magnified into a very formidable being; and, in a few seconds, those amongst them who could run, ran with all their might, and those who could only hobble, hobbled with all their energy; Bridogue Mooney leading the cohort, with the loudest screams offended virtue could put forth, while at each inch of their way over Windgap hill, every echo of his devilish laugh added impetus to the hearts and heels of the scandalized fugitives.

The strange man of the Inch, now that he could be really looked upon, seemed to be about forty-five; though he might be less, for his face, that is, as much of it as was fully visible, had become disfigured by ugly gashes, which probably added to it an appearance of age. Over half of his features he wore a black handkerchief; and of the one eye left exposed, scarce any thing worse than power and brilliancy of expression could be conjectured. An air of lofty command ran through his bearing. He was clad in a full skirted coat of blue cloth, richly laced; a vest of embroidered silk, a small-clothes of blue plush, and silk stockings, and square-toed shoes, with silver buckles in them.

After the retreat of the old women, his shocking laughter suddenly settled into a bold imperious manner, and his single observable eye flashed

fiercely, and his brow knit deeply above it, as he looked on every side at the gaping crowd.

"Come, make way here, fellows," he said; "I have a strong inclination to punish a score or two of you, for your rough handling, now that you have dared to rob me of my cloak and hat; make way, I say, or I will score some ugly marks on your foolish faces;" and he tapped the short crooked sword at his side.

All the old men around Maurteen, and all the young people who had followed from the place of the dance, were receding to make way accordingly, when Maurteen Maher clutched his osier-wand, and, sitting very upright in his chair, cried out in a sonorous voice—

"Stop! stop awhile, genteel, and give an account of yourself."

The strange man of the Inch turned suddenly round, and glared at the questioner.

"Yes," resumed Maurteen, "I'd have a word or two wid ye, afore ye lave our place."

The summoned person was evidently much surprised and offended at this interruption. He walked rapidly over to his worship, fixed a stern look upon him, was silent for an instant, and at last, burst forth in a question:

"Who the d—l are *you*, that stops *me?*"

Maurteen Maher did not wince before the strange man of the Inch. He held his head loftily, and his tone was bold without being arrogant, as he answered,

"*I* am the Mayor of Wind-gap, far above the

Mayor of the town below us; as you may larn by lookin' on the hoight of this place, and how low the town lies at our feet."

"Take your foolish mummery to some other market, you old ridiculous Irish fellow," said the strange man of the Inch, again vehemently turning to go away.

"There is no mummery about me," said Maurteen. "I govern the people here by their own free will and consent; and I govern them for their good."

"You're an old gray-headed idiot, I take it; and ye look d—d impertinently at me, and I've half a mind to change your tone," continued the "sthrange man."

"'Tisn't by fighting with the sword, I should be able to rule over my neighbours; but for all that, I'm not afeard o'ye, as wicked as they say ye are, and as fierce as your one eye burns upon me; so you need not lay your hand upon your crooked hanger; the odds o' the battle 'ud be agin' ye; but I don't want any thing but pace and quiet. Listen to me; I'm tould ye said evil words into the ear of a young girl at the dance, and put your arms round her, when she didn't want them, and for that offence on Wind-Gap, you are brought before me, the Mayor. It is time for you to give over foolish and sinful notions and behaviour. The snow of age has not fallen on your locks as thick as it has upon mine; but still I'd have you thinkin' o' your grave. 'Tis a shkandle to us on Windgap to see a middle aged man runnin' the race o'

the wicked; and I say to you, repent o' your sins, and larn to be a Christhin."

This magnificent address, though full of never-to-be-forgotten morality, to the ears of Maurteen's neighbours, seemed to strike the "sthrange man" as something eminently ridiculous. He burst into a renewal of his former fit of laughter, and hurried, now unobstructed, from the presence of his lecturer.

The chief offender's companion had stood apart during the scene we have described; he moved after his principal.

The Mayor advanced hastily towards him, seized his cloak, suddenly dragged it open and glanced into his face; it was but a momentary view he could have gained of the person's features, who recoiled, and drew his disguise closer round him. But there were others besides the Mayor who imagined they had recognised the second domino, as will soon be seen.

"I had a notion who was hid under that cloak," said the Mayor privately to this individual.

"I promised to stand your friend, and 'twas plain to me, and now 'tis plainer than ever, that a friend you will want to give you help when you are not thinkin' you need it. Poor boy! I hard it long ago, and I b'leve at present that there is a doom upon you, and that ye must work your way through it. Go then, in heaven's name, and face it. I'll keep my word to you all the same; the Mayor of Wind-gap *will* be your friend."

The person he addressed hastened away in the

path of the strange man of the Inch, as if glad, like him, to be freed of Maurteen's sermons.

It was some time before the sensation, created by this commotion at the bonfire, became appeased. Little bare-legged scouts were sent out after the old women, who slowly returned, upon the strongest assurances, on the part of the Mayor, of their personal safety. Terror may be an impulse, particularly acting upon the delicate constitution of the nervous female system; but above even terror, is to be ranked the nervous curiosity of the softer sex; so that, according to these two rules, the old sisterhood of Wind-gap may be permitted, after the allaying of their mortal fright, to assemble once more round the bonfire, and its sovereign. Nay, they even squatted down again on the very spot they had lately abandoned, brim-full, every one of them, of most fruitful subjects of conversation. Above all other things, the Mayor's bold and magisterial bearing drew forth their unlimited eulogy; and we suspect that Maurteen had intended it should have produced such an effect; at all events, he felt his character to be considerably elevated this night, in the eyes of his subjects.

His worship continued calmly to preside over the renewed gossip, and answered in good-humoured loftiness to the adulation showered upon him. And we believe that the old women of Wind-gap could have remained for a week sitting on their heels, so highly did they relish the music of each other's tongues, had not the Mayor reminded them that the hour for the display of their

activity was come; at which intimation, the aged belles and the gray-headed beaux of his jurisdiction joined hands, and, forming a circle, set to dancing with all their possible agility, round and round the glimmering remnants of the bonfire; those who could boast the greatest strength of limb supported others whose sinews refused to bend with sufficient flexibility, and whose joints had become rusty in their sockets. In this career of crippled movements; in the gray locks set floating by their motion; and in the wrinkled visages of the performers, there was a semblance more to a crowd of witches and wizards, enjoying the seething of their spells in a caldron, than to that of earthly people, engaged in an earthly pastime; while the Mayor, with his white wand presiding over the rite, was no unfit representative of the requisite enchanter, and while the grotesque figures of Meehawl O'Moore, and of his gigantic mate, might be interpreted into two very ungainly imps, attending upon him.

When the red embers had been nine times encircled by the new dancers, each crone secured a portion of them, and took it carefully home, as one security against charms for the ensuing year; and we may safely close this chapter with the assertion that they all wended towards their beds heavily laden with the shannauchs and occurrences of this "prasent blessed St. John's Eve."

After the close of every festivity, it was the custom of the Mayor of Wind-gap to patrol with his bailiff his circuit of authority; accordingly upon

this night, when it was time for all to be a-bed and quiet, he renewed his customary precautions, and went to his own pillow assured that all his people were "safe and sound," and, against all chances, certain of continuing so till the morning. But, for once in his life, at least, the Mayor of Wind-gap was wrong.

CHAPTER VI.

THERE may be some long-lived persons yet in existence, bred and born even out of the salubrious air of Wind-gap, who remember Roger Divey. He was best known in his day by the title of "yallow Roger,"—a surname derivable from the sooty-saffron hue of as much of his real surface as could be seen—namely, his large, lank, parchment-covered countenance, his hands and his legs. He was a tall, gaunt man; his trunk of heavy bones, loosely strung together, supported by extremities, not much thicker, nor better shaped from the knees to the ankles, than the huge cudgel he always carried. At the time of our history, Roger was sergeant of the real Mayor of our town and its suburbs, including, of course, Wind-gap itself; and it was pretty well known that dame justice had no retainer in her service more mercenary than he.

If one might judge by his external aspect, he was a man of sedate gravity; apparently somewhat stupid; and honest, without the slightest shrewdness, or design. Herein, however, lay Roger's

talent; for, under the disguise of a sage and very uncomely owl, he hid the raven's cunning and rapacity. A lofty, pompous personage, withal, was Roger; slowly and solemnly he strode along the streets, his head erect, and his every action full of that "pride of place" which he felt marked him as the holder of a station of much power and importance.

The morning after the bonfire on Wind-gap hill, Roger Divey was seen pacing through a certain street in the town, in which he officiated; and those in the habit of observing his outward expression, understood, by the settled dignity of his brow, and the severe and ominous protrusion of his nether lip, that he was proceeding on some errand of moment, connected with his calling. Opposite neighbours met half-way in the street, and put their heads together to express their conviction that he had weighty matters in hand; and passengers, as they encountered him, stopped short, and turned their eyes after the imposing official, each endeavouring to enlighten the other as to his probable destination.

Fully aware of the many inquiring looks directed towards his movements, Roger did not, however, vouchsafe to show the slightest consciousness of the important curiosity he excited. Filled with his own greatness, he strode onward; paused at the end of the street, and surveyed, with a deliberate traversing glance, a certain house; then nodded his head sedately to itself; moved three stately steps to the hall door; and calculatingly raised its

knocker; and in his own good time, banged it down with such force that one might think the lion's head, moulded on it, had sent forth a roar.

After this tremendous challenge, Roger drew back some paces; hit the head of his gigantic shillelagh against the paving-stones; stretching forth his right arm at full length, rested the palm of his right hand upon it; fixed his left arm a-kimbo; boldly advanced his right leg before his person; threw back his head; and in this position awaited the result of his summons.

The door was opened by a frightened-looking serving wench, and the figure of the landlady of the house appeared at some distance behind her.

"I say, you girl, you," demanded the man of authority, "would ye have one Masther George Blundell on the premishes, here?"

"E—ah!" was the only reply of the astonished and true Irish girl.

"Ye slut, ye!" continued Roger, "make thrue answer to sich custions as shall be demanded o' ye, at your peril, do you see me?"

"What may be your business with my lodger, Mr. Blundell?" questioned the landlady, coming forward.

"That's his own consarn, Misthress of the house, d' ye see me? Make known to the young gintleman, i' ye plaze, that w'd discoorse with him; we don't have a call to people for no rason."

"Mr. Blundell isn't yet up, I b'lieve," said the landlady.

"That makes no maxim, Marram; up or down,

it's all the same to us. Jest give him to undherstand that w'd hould some speech with him."

"You cannot see him now, you must call another time, my good fellow."

"Ha, hum, good fellow? who is it you affront by the name of good fellow? Marram, we must see him, and we shall see him, or we'll know for what."

Roger having spoken these words in a loud infallible voice which filled the whole street, cast his eye towards a window over head, and at it perceived the object of his inquiry looking down at him: he waved his arm magisterially, and continued—"Walk ye down here to us, young Master, walk down here to us, d'ye see me?" nor was this command given in a puny accent.

George Blundell was shortly on the threshold.

"What have you to say to me, Sirrah?"

"Ah, hum, Sirrah? we are no Sirrah, my youth, we are no Sirrah; isn't these purty doin's? purty doin's isn't they? by ye're lave, here, all o' ye, by your lave, d'ye see me?" and Roger jostled through the group, which his bellowing and other noises had created, strode to the door-way, and, passing George Blundell, entered the hall of the house.

"What's to get ye clear out o' this prosecution, young master? there isn't a bail bond to be taken, if we don't give in to take it for ye?"

"Why are you disturbing the house, fellow? let me know your errand at once, or I will thrust you into the street."

"Ha, hum, this kind o' talk won't sarve ye,

while ye're afore his worship, and myself; it's a burglary matther, let me tell ye, many a stout fellow has died without being sick for a less charge, d'ye see me?"

"Explain yourself, or begone"—

"Begone! ha, hum; would nothing do your turn, my young masther, but to make a burglary on the dwellin' house, *why at arms*, and to brake dours, and to take, force, and carry away a man's daughther from him? and wid sticks, stones, and staves, to say nothing o' swoords and pistols, to make *salt and butthery* on a man? Let me tell ye, d'ye see me, that we know how to dale wid sich doin's; and barrin' there's one to make the case clear for ye, ye'll be hard run to keep away from the hill beyant the river, where some people dance upon nothing, to save their shoes."

"You are under some mistake, fellow; leave the house, and do not make a crowd round the door."

"Hem, lave the house! is that all I'm to get for my warning?"

"Leave it instantly!" and George looked dangerous.

"And who's to stand for ye, when ye're afore the Mayor and me, d'ye see me?"

George took the man by the collar, and, without much exertion, led him to the threshold, and pushed him over it. At that moment, his eyes rested upon a certain face and form in an opposite

window, he bowed confusedly, retreated quickly, and shut the door on the outraged dignitary.

Roger had paid this early visit, in the way of pecuniary speculation. He calculated on being retained by George Blundell as an advocate, and had hoped to pocket by his services, a good round sum. Now, it might have been supposed, that in proportion to his seeming failure, would be his wrath and disappointment. But, he not only felt no passion, but did not lose sight of his main object. He was not a hasty man, and he had his wits sufficiently about him to reckon that, with proper management, this assault on his sacred person, might eventually increase his profits. For Roger had never much objection to a slight drubbing; on the contrary, he considered such little events as among his means of gaining an honest livelihood. We have seen him put forward his as yet unofficial charge, against George Blundell, in the highest tone of exaggeration. This was also his uniform practice; for the greater the terror he inspired in a guilty breast, the more heavy would be the retaining fee, for his pleading before the Mayor; or if he thundered forth his accusations and threats upon an innocent person, the more likely would be the accused to fly out into a passion and break Roger's pate, and in that case, although the original process fell to the ground, he would be sure to make money by the "salt and butthery business."

To the mansion of the Mayor, (by the way, we have lately sketched a Mayor of a town and his sergeant, but trusting to the total dissimilarity between them and our present subjects, we cannot resist the temptation of presenting our readers with a companion-picture to the former one,) to the mansion of the Mayor, Roger wended his way. It was at that time the good old practice of the chief magistrates of the city to hold their court wherever they pleased, and their private dwellings were, during their term of office, often transformed, therefore, into halls of justice. Wind and weather permitting, our present Mayor decided all cases in the open air, at least, so far as regarded the positions of the plaintiffs and defendants before him. The house, occupied about fifty-five years ago by his worship, is now in existence, and whatever might then have been thought of it, appears to us a very mean edifice, only two stories high, and the whole of its first floor, as was also the case in Roger Divey's day, used as a shop; of which the little bow-window still holds, we are assured by very old people, the self-same, (to all appearance at least,) red-herrings, tallow candles, rows of tobacco, decanters of spirits, tea-cannisters, and so forth, and so forth, which it did in the eighteenth century.

One half of the Mayor's shop-door was raised up on hinges, and hooked against the ceiling; the top edge of the other half served as a resting-place for

his round elbows, when in an attitude half-standing, half-bending, and mainly supported by those elbows, he discharged his judicial functions; the complaining and the answering parties being assembled, mean time, as we before premised, in the street. By the charter of the city we treat of, it is decreed that "wise, discreet citizens" shall be chosen to fill the several municipal offices; but, unluckily, the instrument gives no datum by which one may ascertain what is to be considered wisdom and discretion in the said city; so that these qualities, legally specified as indispensable, have, from time to time, been very differently exemplified, in very different individuals.

Roger Divey had been dubbed "yallow Roger;" his worship, the Mayor, who, on the arbitrary word of the interpreters of the charter, was a "wise and discreet citizen," had also received a surname, that of "alderman split-fig:" because, when weighing a penny-worth of figs in his shop, he would divide one of them into four parts, rather than give weight beyond the legal complement. He had contrived, however, to amass a considerable sum of money, (considerable, according to his time and position,) chiefly by these very saving talents; and we will at once admit that there can be no more valuable quality than the aptitude to get rich; and that it is our belief that, by the sense of all the world, as well as by that of his constituents, our present Mayor gave, in the length of

his purse, proof positive of "wisdom and discretion."

When Roger Divey arrived at the Mayor's place of audience, a crowd of suitors had assembled in the street, around the half door, or hatch-way. At the appearance of the influential officer, all instantly flocked to him, and all began, in the same breath, to relate their different grievances, or put forward their different defences. Roger authoritatively silenced this clamour; singled out the opposing parties, and led them, each in turn, into a lane that turned off at the corner of the Mayor's dwelling. There he listened to charge and reply; cried Ha! ha! hem! at proper intervals; occasionally nodded his sage head; most condescendingly glanced out of the corner of his eye, into the palm of his hand, to ascertain the relative amount of each feē; for Roger was always retained on both sides; and the cases in this initiatory court were adjourned, in the first instance, to the greasy counter in the Mayor's shop, where, before real trial, Roger farther received from each disputant a little conciliation, in the shape of a glass of the peculiar kind of spirituous liquor which, by anxious calculation, could be concluded most acceptable to his palate; one giving him half a "noggin" of gin and bitters, another a dram of brandy, another a modicum of purl and gill, and so on; and all this while Roger left his group of clients doubtful of the side he should ultimately take.

There was a second adjournment into the street; the half-door was again closed and bolted, and at length his worship appeared to his crowded court, leaning over it. His wig not being ready dressed, a red woollen night-cap covered his bald head, and an ample outside coat, sufficiently ample even for his dimensions, hung cloakwise from his shoulders, its sleeves falling down his back; and we vault over his hatch-way, and land in his shop, to add that the knees of his black plush breeches were, even at this hour of the morning yet unbuttoned; that his broad red garters, which lapped over and over in many folds, to tighten his light blue stockings, were visible a little above the round of his leg; and that his feet were in comfortable listen slippers.

His worship was stricken in years; low, stout, and indeed undignified, in figure; the opposite, in fact, of his chief officer; and a pair of large gray protruding eyes, a broad flat nose; an under lip so conveniently pushing out, as to afford a comfortable resting-place for its upper one, and altogether a round plump face, showed little of a physiognomonical corroboration of the evidence supplied, on a certain point, by his long purse.

Giving his loose outside coat a twich, in order to settle it round his shoulders, and then folding it comfortably under his arms, he leaned, as usual, both his elbows on the edge of the half-door, and quietly turned his leaden eyes up and down the street.

"The top o' the mornin' to your worship"—began Roger, snatching off his three-cocked hat, scraping his hob-nailed brogues along the pavement, and accompanying this movement by a corresponding bend in his lathy figure.

"A good morning to you, kindly, Roger," answered his worship, his gurgling voice making way with difficulty through his short round throat, "and what thrials comes on to-day, Roger?"

In practical answer to this query, Roger at once proceeded in his accustomed capacity of counsel for and against. He brought forward plaintiffs and defendants in turn; he detailed, with great deliberation, and much ostentation of manner, various cases, with the replies to each; and now it was that the amount of a fee had due effect. If, during his recital, the party whose advocate he had for the moment become, found himself misrepresented, and endeavoured in consequence to interrupt the statement, his worship interposed, saying, with great quietude and complacency, "Asy now, asy! and let Roger tell it"—occasionally, however, the Mayor turned his eye heavily upon Roger's client, with an expression which indicated a sluggish wish to comprehend the orator's entanglement of a plain story, had Heaven but blessed him with a due quantum of "wisdom and discretion." But if, in reply to such mute appeals, the plaintiff began to speak, the defendant was sure to start against him at the same moment, with

the utmost power of his lungs and ingenuity; at which his worship's perplexity becoming trebled, he was glad to fall back upon Roger's single puzzle; and his "Asy, asy now, good people, lave it to Roger"—would soon stop all clamour; for Roger scarce ever failed to impose silence under the good magistrate's authority.

"Well Roger, and what do *you* think about it?" his worship would ask, when both stories were recapitulated over and over; and Roger, summing up evidence, in a masterly style, gave a decision, which the Mayor instantly adopted as his own. If any aggrieved person happened to expostulate—"Go your ways, go your ways, my good man"—was the signal for Roger to force off the grumbling suitor. Nor could the Mayor be in any instance accused of injustice; for, although his judgments were most frequently absurd, his intentions bore him harmless. It was not his fault that Roger's superior genius should keep his mind in leading-strings; and we must therefore in candour visit upon Roger exclusively the faulty administration of justice, in this rather slovenly court.

One man, amongst the complainants of the morning, seemed bursting with the magnitude of the case he had come to put forward, and with the intensity of the feeling it excited in his breast. Frequently he advanced to begin his story; but Roger invariably thrust him back, to make way for others. In fact, whether from indigence, or because he

regarded his grievance as sufficiently great to command immediate and full attention, this person had given Roger no retainer. But at length, every excuse for farther delay was exhausted, and Roger could only look up and down the street in expectation of George Blundell's appearance; and, finally, as that young gentleman chose to absent himself altogether, very contrary to the hopes of the venal advocate, the Mayor's sergeant determined to plead forcibly against him, merely that his services might in future be more properly estimated.

"Plaze your worship," said Roger, "there is one Juff Carroll, d' ye see me; and he's from the Wind-gap abroad there, your worship; and he lives in his little cabin there, indhusterin' for his bread, d' ye see me; and we can put in bail, your worship, that he's an honest hard-working crature of a man; and, by coorse, 'twas last night your worship"——

"Jest an hour afore the dawn of day," cried the applicant, "when my darlin' Peggy and myself came home from the bonfire on Wind-gap hill; and we sed our little prayers, and we went to our beds."

"Wisht, wisht, Juff Carroll," interrupted Roger.

"Asy, asy now, my honest man! and let Roger tell it to me," decided the Mayor: we would vary his phraseology, but that by so doing, we should

not be true to our original; for he invariably made use of the same words, on similar occasions; as if life, time, breath, and above all things, intellect, were things too precious to be squandered on the vain attempt of trying to express the same thought in two different ways.

"This poor honest Juff Carroll," resumed Roger, "who is here standing afore your worship, in the hoight of trouble, d' ye see me—he has a purty daughter, a purty honey, d' ye see me, your worship."

"Is she a purty honey, indeed, Roger?" his worship was always moved when Roger became oratorical.

"Oh! where's my Peggy now?" ejaculated the bereaved parent, "where have they dragged her, from the father that doted on her, in his heart within him!"

"And you were fond of her in your heart, my poor man," demanded the Mayor, surprising all who heard him with the abundance of his speech; but he had a daughter too.

"Why shouldn't I, your worship? she was my only child! and the mother of her left her to me on the bed where she was born! the light o' my eyes she was upon my flure, the comfort of my days!"

"Whist, whist now, Juff Carroll,"—interrupted the sergeant, getting jealous of Nature's spontaneous eloquence.

"Yes, asy my good man, asy now," added the Mayor, brushing the tears from his eyes, "asy, and let Roger tell it."

Accordingly, Roger resumed, "'Twas last night, d' ye see me, your worship, that the burglary and threspass was done on poor Juff Carroll; they broke open the dowr of his cabin, *why at arums*, d' ye see me, your worship, and the little daughter was taken, forced, and carried away from him."

"Dear me, dear me," sympathized the Mayor, "and tell me, Roger, does this honest poor man know the people that done the burglary and the threspass on him? hey, Roger?"

"I do, I do know," answered the father, too rapidly for Roger's interference; "I'd all as one swear my book oath that the man that sthruck me down was the sthrange man o' the Inch, and among the other men that were helpin' him, I'll swear there was one man, wearin' the same cloak and the same hat that young George Blundell had upon him, when I saw him in the sthrange man's company at the bonfire; the time that the sthrange man frightened my poor Peggy, by his unmannerly behaviour to her, and by his evil words in her ear."

"What does he mane by the sthrange man o' the Inch, Roger?" asked the Mayor.

"Why, your worship, 'tisn't out of your knowledge that there is one dangerous tory of a man livin' at the wicked ould house at the Inch, abroad

there; and he's an ould offender, d'ye see me—we had him up more than onst, afore your worship: and since then, he goes on with more wickeder plottin's and doin's than ever, out at the Inch, and"——

A smart tap from an open palm on Roger's shoulder interrupted his narrative. Offended and angry at the freedom, he turned quickly round; the strange man of the Inch was at his elbow. The father of Peggy Carroll, without power to utter a word, started, gaped, pointed, and chattered his teeth at the dreaded visiter.—

The strange man was now dressed differently from his costume of the preceding night. A black silk handkerchief yet covered, indeed, one eye and part of one cheek; over the other side of his face fell the peak of his laced cocked hat; and, to the fancy of some detesting observers, seemed to borrow a corresponding fierceness, and to become somehow frightfully identified with the flaming ball which it shaded. His coat was of scarlet cloth embroidered with gold lace, his small clothes were black satin, his stockings black silk, and his well polished shoes were adorned with sparkling silver buckles.

There was a malicious, confident jocularity of manner about the strange man, as he moved into the lane, at the corner of the Mayor's house, beckoning Roger Divey to follow him. Roger, comprehending, at a glance, the meaning of his invita-

tion, instantly accepted it. For a few moments he and his formidable confidant stood there within the recess of a gate-way. The strange man did not re-emerge into the main street, but Roger duly reappeared before the Mayor. Peggy Carroll's father was disjointedly proceeding in his tale of grievance.

"Juff Carroll, hould your tongue," interrupted Roger, and the Mayor pronounced his usual command for silence. Roger gravely addressed the chief magistrate:

"Your worship, poor Juff Carroll, that's here to the fore, and an honest crature of a man he is, d' ye see me, has a bad case to argufy afore your worship—an' we'll all do our endavors to rightify him, and to bring the offendhers undher the law, and why not, d'ye see me. More be token, since they made *salt and butthery* agin the person of Juff Carroll hisself—not to talk of the burglary and of the carrying away, by force and arums, o' the poor purty dhaughter of him,—'twas the greatest murdher ever you seen, your worship, that he hadn't the light o' the day, or even a bit of a candle, or a rish-light itself, or a thing o' the kind, that 'ud help him to see and to 'dentify the housebreakers that sthruck him down on the flure of his own little cabin, into a swoon, like, in sich away (the villains!) that he couldn't see 'em if he had the full light o' the day itself, because people's eyes are shet, when there's a wakeness on them; an' 'twould be against the law to let wicked people be free that brake the pace a second time, for

poor Juff Carroll, and dhragged his dhaughter, as aforesaid, over her father's threshold, afther committing burglary upon the dour of the cabin; all the while that the poor sufferin' man couldn't tell from Adam who made him fall down into the swoon."

"He that forced off my Peggy," cried out Juff Carroll, "was here a moment agone—that was the robber of my child, and young Blundell was helpin' of him."

"Asy now, asy, poor man, God help ye; but you'll put Roger out: let Roger tell it to me; well Roger?" interposed the Mayor.

"There's foolish people, plaze your worship, that talks o' the jontleman livin' in the ould house at the Inch, abroad there; bud we'll put in good 'sponsible bail for him, afore your worship, that he's nothin' but a quiet, dacent man, and that he'd no more commit a burglary on poor Juff Carroll's dour, *why at arums*, no more nor we'd do it ourselves, afther a manner, d'ye see me, your worship. But if we can come, by hook or crook, across the bad boys that have done the harum to this crature o' a man, (poor Juff Carroll that's to the fore,) won't we lay the heavy hand on'em, and for why not, d'ye see me, your worship?"

There were violent efforts, on the part of the agonized father, to fix his charge on the person now praised in the speech of the mercenary officer; but peace and quiet were placidly recommended by the Mayor, and obstreperously insisted on by Roger.

"Ah, your worship, he's a very, very honest jontleman, livin' quiet and asy at the Inch; a nate paceable house, your worship, all alone by itself, out of harum's way; and, as for young Masther Blundell, if the cratur of a daughter belonging to this poor honest man was to stay in poor Juff's cabin till she ran to seed into an ould granny, he'd never the boy that 'ud lay a finger on her; for he's the most modestest of all the boys, gentle or simple, that your worship and I has the throuble of lookin' afther. And so, your worship, d'ye see me, we'll do our endeavours to saize the raal offendhers, or by this stick in my hand, Juff Carroll," he continued, turning to the now desponding parent—"we'll see the just thing done by you, in time and rason; for his worship, the Mayor, does right and thrue by every sowl that comes afore his face, d'ye see me?"

The case was decided. In vain did Juff Carroll aver that he was "a most proof positive," that the strange man of the Inch was the ruffian that plundered him of his child, and that George Blundell was one of his disguised accomplices. Roger still contended, and very plausibly too, according to the Mayor's opinion, that Juff could not at any period of the affray have distinguished the persons of his assaulters and destroyers, because, eventually, he had lain insensible under their hands: and poor Juff at last plodded his way homeward, to Windgap, comforted solely by the slender shadow of promise given by Roger Divey, to see justice done to him. The last words which struck his ear,

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while turning his back on the judgment-seat, were those of his worship the Mayor:

"God help ye, poor man! go your ways now; 'tis a very sorrowful thing for ye; but don't ye hear what Roger says? go your ways, go your ways."

CHAPTER VII.

We are sorry that there hangs over George Blundell, according to his own account, at least, some of the old thread-bare mystery of parentage, and so forth, and wish that we could, as faithful historians, skip it altogether, or else give him at once, in the eyes of the world, a respectable house-keeping father and mother. Against our will, however, we are bound to report of him the morsel of romance which he asserted about himself. From his twelfth year, to his twentieth, (he was now nearly twenty-one,) he had been receiving his education in the eminent seminary of the town where he at present resided, and his remittances had been invariably liberal. When questioned by his class-mates, in the bold intrusive way in which boys will question one another, as to who, and what he was, George Blundell stated himself to be the son of a wealthy merchant, a native of Ireland, who resided in a foreign country. At first this brief explanation appeared satisfactory; but, unfortunately for his quiet, the lad distinguished himself by the intensity of his ap-

plication to his studies, and in consequence by extraordinary progress and scholastic superiority; and now it was found out that his station in life, or his social position, was sufficiently doubtful to alarm his aristocratic young school-fellows, and George was insulted. But those who outraged his feelings suffered for their temerity; he proved himself a fierce fighter, as well as an eclipsing student: in fact, when his passion was roused, he took any odds in years, weight, or height, and always thrashed his man.

One or two other features of his character at school may be noticed. In the athletic sports of his companions, such as foot-ball, wrestling, and so forth, he did not often join. Most frequently while they ran riot over the beautiful lawn that stretched from the academy to the water's edge, he sought a quiet nook, with his favourite authors. And yet, occasionally, when the game or pastime of the day was particularly exciting, he would start up from his loneliness, fling aside his books, enter into the contest, for agile superiority, as eagerly as if it were a question of life and death; and when the palm of excellence became unwillingly ceded to him, he would again quietly and gravely, and with all his previous devotedness, return to his voluntary studies. And thus his boyish days promised a manhood of deep enthusiasm, no matter what might prove to be its momentary object, while his talents for attaining any thing, coupled with his fiery and overbearing spirit, swept all competition before him; and such a character bid fair for eminence,

either in vice or in virtue, according as it might be directed. Now we turn to other matters.

Peggy Carroll, whom we have just seen carried off by, according to her father's account, the man of the Inch, was the foster-sister of Anny Kennedy; and in many points poor Peggy was as dear to Anny as if they had really been sisters. The news, therefore, of the girl's abduction greatly afflicted Anny Kennedy; and with her young attendant, a first cousin of Peggy, she shed many tears over the misfortune. But those tears flowed, perhaps, as readily on another account. It was soon no secret, all over the town, that Juff Carroll had charged George Blundell as an accomplice in the outrage which deprived him of his child: Anny could not close her ears against the rumour; and although his worship, the Mayor, had decided that it was only a misconception, yet, did fear and doubt and terror, possess the young girl's heart; the more particularly as she had been an eye-witness of Roger Divey's visit to the house of her lover, and of George's violent ejection of him into the street—a piece of bravadoism, by the way, which, in Anny's estimation, he need not have enacted, had he felt himself calmly innocent of the serious accusation laid at his door.

Jeffery Carroll lived down by the river-side, and his cabin was the very last within range of the jurisdiction of the Mayor of Wind-gap; and, moreover, it stood not more than a quarter of a mile from the widely celebrated house of the Inch. In Jeffery's humble abode, Anny and her maid Grace

had spent many happy days of their infancy; thither, about the noon of the morning of the investigation before the Mayor, they bent their steps; and there, from poor Jeffery's own tongue, they received a confirmation of all they had previously heard. Nay, the afflicted and loquacious man, talking himself, hour after hour, into certainty upon points which he had before but strongly believed, at present averred that, beyond all doubt, George Blundell was one of the ravishers of his daughter. And now Anny's grief and despair at least equalled his. After some time spent in vain endeavours to console Juff Carroll, the two young women began to retrace their way homeward. They were close to a lane, which, shaded by bushes on either hand, led directly to the water's edge, and were about to enter it, when Anny Kennedy drew back in terror, for within it she heard the accents of George Blundell, although she could not see his person, and he was engaged in conversation with another man, whose harsh, abrupt tones conveyed a frightful anticipation to Anny's heart.

"One word more, one sound more, from your lips, sir, and you shall repent it," said the strange bad voice, in a most dictatorial tone—"from that instant I throw you upon your own flourishing resources; you must wait my time, sir, and nothing else will I hear on the subject."

"And while I wait your time, she may be lost to me for ever," replied George Blundell.

"That is nothing to the purpose, sir;—but tell

me, sir, what like girl is this, who has so caught your foolish fancy? this Anny Kennedy?"

"She is such, even in person, that words of mine would fail to describe her."

Notwithstanding her terror, and all her agonizing misgivings, the true woman fluttered for an instant at these words in Anny's heart, and she felt rather obliged to George Blundell.

"Snap her up, sir—snap her up; it can only be herself you want, and herself is easily had for a little courage; let me tell you, boy, that a woman is like a gallant vessel on the sea, though still weaker than the ship that encounters her, and the sooner you come to close action, the sooner she strikes her colours; and for this you may take the word of one who knows both the ship at sea, and woman in every clime."

"I fear," resumed George, "that the accusation in which I am involved may have reached her ears—If I might only explain to her, or try, ever so confidentially, to——".

"Tut, tut, sir! not a syllable,—Never shall she be yours, that is, with my assistance, if you open your lips to her on the matter."

Anny stood pale and breathless at these words —It suddenly occurred to her, to avoid the observation of George Blundell and of this unknown arbiter of his destinies, and the wish was fearfully increased, when she heard their footsteps approaching. Her only mode of retreat, however, was along the field path by which she had approached the lane, and this was unprotected by any covering or

screen; so that she could hope to remain out of their view only for a few moments. While hesitating and trembling, George Blundell and his companion, suddenly issuing from the lane, were close to her. At sight of Anny, the former seemed overwhelmed with amazement and confusion; the latter started into an attitude of bold and intrusive interest, and fixed a daring look upon her face.

"The sthrange man!—the sthrange man o' the Inch!" whispered Anny's attendant, grasping her mistress by the arm; and agitated as Anny herself was, she felt that poor Grace Carroll shook in a very palsy of fear.

But Anny took her resolution and her course at once: onward she hurried, in as quick a pace as she could command, Grace Carroll still holding her arm, and trotting at her side. George Blundell addressed her, but she had passed him before the words reached her ear; she heeded him not, but hastened onward—He called her by name; she did not notice him. She heard his foot behind her. Anny, identified as he now clearly stood with the evil person in whose company she had found him, felt an impulse to run with all her might from her lover; but she checked the nervousness, by the recollection that such an act would be beneath her.

"Dearest Anny, why do you shun me thus?" asked George Blundell, when he had come up with her—she again tried to quicken her pace, but did not answer him. He kept close at her side, and besought her to speak. She glanced hastily

behind her; the strange man was not in view—a turn in the lane had hidden him from her. She felt somewhat relieved, yet could not, without an effort, command her breath to say—

"Mr. Blundell, I had rather walk alone."

"Anny, adored Anny, what can be the meaning of this? Why do you shun to-day the man you did not shun yester evening?"

Anny was again silent, and still walked briskly on—her movements a little retarded, by the way, in consequence of the heavy weight, in the shape of Grace Carroll, which dragged down her arm.

"Anny, is it possible, Anny, you can give credit to those absurd rumours raised against me? and do you really think me guilty, Anny, of all they lay to my charge?"

She stopped suddenly, and, looking down for an instant, answered him, for a girl, sternly—

"Mr. Blundell, I will not pronounce an opinion on your guilt, or your innocence; but, as calmly and as firmly as my foolish fright, and my true indignation, permit, I tell you, that, even with the bare imputation on your character of the crimes to which you allude, it is more than presumptuous in you to address me at present, as you do."

"Presumptuous, my own darling Anny? presumptuous, did you say?" whined forth the unintelligible George Blundell.

"Yes, sir, presumptuous; for do you suppose that I can ever again speak with a man, even in the coldest intercourse of society, who has violated the

sanctity of a virtuous roof, and dragged a daughter from a father's arms? Or, sir, do you suppose, have you dared to suppose, that I ever could have interchanged even the slightest intimacy with him, had I imagined he was capable of such an act?"

"My adored Anny, I swear to you by the——"

"Fy, sir, fy—your coming oath is a new affront—I am a woman and a lady, and not yet at your mercy, to listen to it."

"Oh Anny—most beloved Anny—I know not what to say——"

"Neither do I know, sir, what you may say; but I know perfectly well what you ought to do. Listen to me, Mr. Blundell—I loved, and I love my foster-sister, Peggy Carroll; although an humble girl, she was a very good-hearted one—to say nothing of her being very lovely; she was a sensible and discreet girl too, and used to act as a kind of elder sister towards me:—Go, sir, to your bad companion—the disreputable man you have just parted from—go to him, sir, and persuade him to restore my poor Peggy to her agonized father; let her be restored, Mr. Blundell, as you found her, and as I knew her; but at all events, sir,—Oh *do* restore her to her father!" and the once coquetting Anny wept bitter and beautiful tears.

"Oh!" groaned Blundell, "I see I am lost for ever!"

There was seemingly deep affliction in the tones

of his voice as he uttered these few words; they struck like a knell on Anny's ear; she could not avoid glancing up into his face, and its expression touched her heart. Wo, and despair of the deepest hue, racked over it. It claimed even common compassion; and the good, the pure-minded, and the gentle-hearted Anny involuntarily afforded it her full pity. For, indeed, she argued—*if* argument she could be supposed to have made—*it* did not express callous profligacy, but only spoke of an intense, inward suffering.

"Well, well, George,—Mr. Blundell, I meant to say—what is your answer to me at last?" Her beautiful little lips were now pale, and convulsed with an effort to cease from her weeping.

"Anny," he answered, "you are right; I do not blame you; I blame, no matter whom—or what—and—but that you are present, I could curse my fate, and the day of my birth. And it is true, very true, that you should not hold the most ordinary intercourse with a person accused as I am; I will not, therefore, intrude upon you; but, at a future time, perhaps, when I may possibly be able to cast the imputation from me, your first scorn may abate, and——"

"*Will* you restore Peggy Carroll to her father?" interrupted Anny.

"At present," answered George Blundell, "I make but this simple declaration—I am guiltless of the young woman's abduction. Professions of principle are nothing. It will, and, under my circumstances, it ought to avail me little to say,

that I contemn and detest such proceedings; for I ought to be able to prove my general assertion, in the particular case you speak of, or my words are as the wind. I only add, my adored, and respected Anny, that if it be in my power to restore Peggy Carroll to her father, the good deed shall be done."—He took off his hat, and bowed low and solemnly.

Even against her sense of all the proprieties, Anny felt half inclined towards a longer parley, but she resisted the temptation, and ceremoniously returning his salutation, passed sagely on. Turning the last point of a curve on her path, she happened, almost without her own wish, to glance back; George Blundell was standing motionless on the spot where she had left him, his hat yet in his right hand; his eyes following Anny, and his left hand pressed across his temples. It was very uncalculating of Anny, that at this sight her compassion outweighed her sense of injury, and that fresh tears—but now not for Peggy Carroll—glistened in her eyes.

"Oh, Miss Anny!" said Grace Carroll, as they proceeded along, "did you ever know such loock as we had this day, to get clear of them so well?"

"Very true, Grace, very true," the young lady answered, scarcely knowing the nature of the question she replied to.—On she walked, her eyes cast down, and her thoughts absorbingly occupied. Her companion continued—

"Did a livin' look ever rest on so terrible a man, as that sthrange man o' the Inch, Miss Anny? Och!

it's a mercy there's but one eye in his head, or no body at all would stand before him, they say; there's not a young crature he stares at that doesn't come to sorrow by him—Poor cousin Peggy, poor cousin Peggy, what a lot is yours!—But—the Lord above be our guard and protection," she suddenly added, pulling at the arm she still held. Anny was startled; she raised her eyes: they had just turned another quick curve of the path-way, which led them homeward; the man they so much disliked and feared was again before them. The green lane barely allowed two persons to walk on abreast; had they gone on, they must, therefore, have separated, and each, in turn, have come alone into close contact with the person of the strange man o' the Inch; who, as if to increase their difficulty, stood in the middle of the way. The terrified girls necessarily paused; Grace Carroll's feet scarce able to support her, and Anny, though endeavouring to summon up her utmost courage, did not feel much calmer.

"Will the beautiful Anny excuse me for waylaying her in this manner?" said the intruder, while the eye which Grace Carroll so much dreaded, seemed to shoot fire on the young lady he addressed.—"But one glance of such beauty as yours only arouses the wish for a second."

"Allow us to pass on, sir," said Anny.

"I perceive, fair lady, that fools have been filling your head with silly stories about me; in fact, the good folks of these parts want to make a kind of buggaboo of me, to frighten their children, and

grown-up young people with; but I should expect more sense, as well as more charity, from such a countenance as yours, Miss Kennedy; doubtless you can laugh, as I assure you I do, to my great amusement, at those absurd stories; for," advancing on her, "I swear by this fair hand"——

"Back, sir!" interrupted Anny, herself recoiling—"Dare you insult *me?*"

"Insult you! By the fire under ground, beautiful Anny, I would not stand by and see the shadow of an offence offered to you; but, being beautiful, how can you avoid paying its penalty of a little sincere admiration?"

Anny's feelings were such as we may suppose to agitate one suddenly thrust into a wild beast's den, who is afraid to arouse the animal's savage nature, even by a single movement.

"Well, sir, I suppose I ought to feel thankful for your flattering opinion; but, sir, we are strangers to each other, and——"

"I know that," interrupted this certainly strange man, "and my business here, therefore, naturally is to try for the honour of your acquaintance."

"Sir, the impropriety of such a thing must, I should hope, be very evident; I would pursue my way with my maid, if it please you——"

"Your maid?—Oh—ay—" and here Grace Carroll came in for her passing share of the regards of the one eye which she held in much more abhorrence than ever, we are sure, did the sage Ulysses that of the chief Cyclop. Instantly she dropped on her knees; hid her face in her hands, worked

the points of her brogues into the dust of the path, and cried out—"Och! sir—no—not me—not me—and the Lord be good to ye."

"Get up, you foolish wench, and run home as fast as you can," resumed the strange man, whose interest seemed not very much created by the plain, though good-natured, features of poor Grace.

"Ah then, won't I, sir, and thank ye!" shouted the consternated girl, feeling the touch of his hand upon her shoulder; and, every thing forgotten, even the safety of her idolized mistress, up to her feet sprang Grace, and onward she went, loudly yelling and clapping her hands.

"This is too insolent," said Anny—trying to pass her tormentor, by almost imitating Grace's example, and running—

"Your hand, then, at least, to say Good-bye," continued the strange man, endeavouring to suit his action to his word.

"Touch me not, fellow!" cried Anny, snatching away her hand, and bounding backwards—"Oh God! is there no resource against an insult like this?"

"Your sarvant, Miss Anny—and your sarvant again, my good sir," said Maurteen Maher, close at the strange man's back. Anny darted to him, and seized one of his arms, whispering, "Save me! oh! save me, good father!"

"Well, Miss Anny, well," said the Mayor of Wind-gap, affecting a simple jocularity of manner: "I often hard it said, and now it's the b'lief I'll die in, that you are the most free-hearted, comical

young lady, that ever we had among us; sure it's a high joke to see ould Maurteen Maher made prisoner by the purtiest crature the sun shines on. Did ever sich thing come to your knowledge afore, sir? Maurteen continued appealing very innocently to the strange man.

"Faiks, and surely I ought to cock my head higher than ever I did. But, Miss Anny, I'll tell you how 'tis to be, this prasent time—the road is too narrow for three of us, and so we must take our way down the hill, over the river—" and, almost while he spoke, the Mayor of Wind-gap suddenly assisted Anny from where they stood, and half ran with her down the hill of which he had spoken.

Strange to say, the strange man, strange as he was, did not attempt to follow them; only gaining a point from which he could note the progress of the old beau, and his charge; and, during his retreat, Maurteen would occasionally look up, and address a word to his strange-ship, while under his breath he encouraged his companion, telling her to fear nothing.

At about the midst of the descent of the hill, there were high clumps of wild furze and young trees—and, notwithstanding the Mayor's exhortations, Anny's courage began again to fail her, as she heard issuing from the obscurity they made, a wild wailing voice.

"Come out o' that, you poor frightened crature," said Maurteen, "and thank God that gave *me* the sense, when it pleased him to lave you without any,

to find you runnin' away from your poor misthress, and to hide you where you could meet her again. Ar'n't ye sorrowful, ye poor *skreed** of a crature?" continued Maurteen, as the half-calmed girl appeared—"ar'n't ye sorrowful, in your heart, for havin' desarted your darlin' young misthress, in her sore need?"

"Oh then, indeed and indeed I am—" sobbed Grace, but now more tranquilly than before, as she a second time fell on her knees, and clasped and kissed her mistress's hand.

Maurteen, doubly charged, a girl hanging upon each arm, continued his way towards and by the river-side. He thought he might now have escaped the observation of an eye which he did not always wish to follow his notions, but seeing the strange man still within view, though at a distance, he resumed, with a very primitive laugh, "Now ar'n't they merry souls, sir? See here, sir; see how they're makin' their own sport of the ould man. *Bonnacth lath*,* sir. God be wid ye, sir."

"And now, Miss Anny," continued the Mayor of Wind-gap, when they had really lost sight of their bugbear, "hould yourself up, and never be daunted. I thought it the best way to come off quiet and aisy; it's ever the wisest plan; he saw well enough that you were frightened out of your seven senses at him; and I have a notion—for he sees far with his one eye—that he guessed I was no fool, though I spoke so simple. But no matther.

* Atom. * Good bye.

It wouldn't answer either him, or me, to come to cross purposes at all."

"I suppose, my good friend, it was not by accident you came to our relief?" asked Anny.

"And indeed you suppose the truth, my purty lady. Do you remember that, of a May evening, I promised you I'd be your friend? and I didn't lose sight of that promise. People tould me that you came to-day, out o' good nature, to poor Juff Carroll's cabin; and when I hard that, I was watchin' after you, for some time; and I saw that ould fox makin' a short cut to be afore ye, on your path: and, as I knew more about the short cuts, in these places, than he could know—he being only the sthrange man at the Inch, after all, I thought I could forestall him; and so, Miss Anny, at the time I came up wid ye, there were five or six sthrong young men from Wind-gap, lying in the ditch, that's now over your head. For although I always had a mind to thry aisy manes, I thought, at that present time, that if the sthrange man shewed any fight against me, in your regard, one whistle on my finger would make him be tumbled head over heels into the river. But we were not called on to attempt that; and we have our own way, any how, widout it; and that's the aisiest way; and the best way, too; for as I often said afore, the aisy way is the best way."

"Good old man," cried Anny, "I could almost kneel to you, to thank you."

"And very sorry I'd be," said Maurteen Maher, "to see you spiling your nice white gownd, goin'

on your knees wid it, on the grass, for a sarvice not worth a *thraneen*. But you, Grace Carroll, have *you* never a word for me?" suddenly asked the Mayor.

"Me! me! Maurteen Maher—me! Mayor o' Wind-gap—" cried Grace, not yet quite unpuzzled from her late dilemma—"Och! what can I say or do? what can I do wid myself at all?"

"Well, well, don't *thry* to spake a word, a cuish-la, if that's what plases you best; and don't be so foolish either, ma colleen; sure he couldn't ate the two o' ye, at the one meal, any how; you may b'lieve my word, tisn't yourself he'd choose to begin with, if he was ever so hungry."

"Night an' day, noon and mornin', I'll be offerin' up my prayers for you, Misther Maher," said Grace Carroll.

"That same will do me no harm, a cuish-la; but now I'll tell ye both what I think; we are nigh hand to the houses, an' there would be a hulloloo, and a high clappin' of hands over all Wind-gap, far and near, if I was fool enough to show my face among the people with Miss Anny Kennedy houlding one of my limbs, and Grace Carroll amost pulling the other out o' my body; let me see if ye can stand alone."

"Oh! do not leave us, my good friend!" besought Anny.

"I'll hould my hould," said her companion,

"By the thruth o' a man," smiled Maurteen, "I wish in my heart I was young an' well lookin', for

your sake, Grace Carroll; and I wish I was the same, over again, and dhrivin' a gilt coach and six, for your sake, Miss Anny. I have no notion at all to go from ye, my darlin's; but, let me tell ye, I must mind myself well, because people look up to me; and I never could hould rule in Wind-gap, if the neighbours were to see me, walkin' in among 'em, gall-vantin' the both of ye, in this manner. I'll stay wid ye, ma-vourneens, only I'll be a little way off; there's nothing to be afeard of now; and if ye can walk widout staggerin' like people in liquor, I'll go on afore ye, an' ye can follow in my steps."

The experiment was tried, and mistress and maid discovered that they could get on very well without support; they entered a suburb street, at the foot of the ascent to the Mayor of Wind-gap's dominions.

"Come after me, if it be plasing to ye, Miss Anny," resumed his worship, "and you too, Grace Carroll, come after me into the house you'll see me enter, I've something to say to the both o' ye."

They obeyed his directions; half way up the hill, he led the way into a very comfortable looking cabin; and here Gregory Roche, the junior Mayor's counsel, welcomed them with many bows and scrapes, and dusted, with his weaver's apron, two chairs, and placed them for the visiters.

"Now, Gregory, go into your work—I want to have some discoorse, here, with Miss Anny; and

when I cough, come out again, and show us your manners, if nothing else, as well as you know how."

"Mayor of Wind-gap, I'll be led and said by you, and for why not? Young lady, I wish health an' happiness to you; Jeffery Carroll's niece, God be wid ye;" and the mannerly Gregory bowed himself away.

"An' now, Miss Anny," continued Maurteen Maher, "I brought ye here for two rasons; first, that ye might rest yourself; rest will be good for you, before you go through the town; for I saw you were sorely frightened a little while agone—"

"Oh, indeed, indeed, I was," assented Anny.

"And I don't wonder; and it isn't to frighten ye more, that I am goin' to spake further to ye; but I want to put you on your guard, Miss Anny —You'd do a right thing to stay within your dour for the present. You are not the kind of a body that would come to much good, by often crossin' the path o' the sthrange man o' the Inch, or to let him be crossin' yours."

"What can you mean? This is very foolish, or very terrible indeed."

"Don't let the words give ye terror, Miss Anny, for all that—for I'll tell ye something more; you may place your dependence on me; I have knowledge over him, and I have power over him; and I'll use the one and the other, in such a way that he can never do you a harm. But we'll have some speech on this head another time; and

that time must not be far off neither. But for the present time, there's other business. The second rason why I brought you in here was, because I had some news to tell ye, Miss Anny, and you too, into the bargain, Grace, on the head of one Peggy Carroll.

The too girls started, and put many questions to Maurteen.

"She is safe, and sound, and well,"—answered the Mayor, smiling; without hurt or sorrow, beyond the fright she got; only *that's* enough to make her remember the man of the Inch, to her dyin' day; and it will give you faith in me, on your own account, Miss Anny, and 'twill make ye b'lieve I can do things other people cannot do, when I tell ye the Mayor of Wind-gap saved Peg Carroll from that very man."

Grace Carroll asked no questions, uttered no words, but ran to the Mayor, threw her arms around his neck, and kissed him until he was tired of the pastime.

"Come, come, Grace," he said, "we must behave ourselves dacent—you'll get a disrespectful name among the neighbors; there, ma-colleen, sit down, and listen to all about it."

And poor Grace resumed her seat, wiping the tears from her eyes with her apron, and giggling, blushing, and ashamed of her ecstasies.

In great astonishment, Anny Kennedy inquired how he had been able to accomplish his good work?

"I have a notion," answered Maurteen, "that Peggy Carroll will tell her own story in the best fashion, and more to your likin' than I could."

"She is here! she is in the house?" cried Anny, springing from her seat, while Grace pranced wildly round and round her mistress, laughing loudly, and of course clapping her hands.

"She is undher this roof, of a sartainty," answered the Mayor; "before it came to my knowledge that you and Grace there—(Grace, you big omadhoun, behave yourself quiet, I bid ye)—were goin' to Juff Carroll's cabin, it was my mind to be wid him afore ye, and let him into the sacret; but ye put the thought out o' my head, for that present time, and though Peggy slept here the best part o' last night, I wouldn't undeceive Juff airly in the morning, because he would then go wid his complaint to that ould *gommulagh* the Mayor o' the town, and so the Man o' the Inch would guess Juff knew where she had been taken to, and that wouldn't be the safest way—howsomever, poor Juff will soon larn all about it, and his ould heart set at ease—and it would never do to take Peggy to her father, for there might be a watch set for her, thereabouts, and she can keep close here for awhile, and no one the wiser."

The sage Mayor coughed twice, very audibly, as he finished this explanation; and the mannerly Gregory Roche accordingly reappeared, ushering in the emancipated damsel, who was instantly in the arms of her foster-sister, and nearly as in-

stantly in those of her real blood relation, Grace.

"There's a kind of a bird," the Mayor went on, when the simple transports of this re-meeting had been interchanged—"that tells me of many things that happen, and many things that will happen—whether it's a jackdaw, or a magpie, or a *shawneen-black-cap*, makes no maxim; but I knew before it came to pass what was to happen to poor Peggy"—(here, even his faithful historians half doubt the assertions of the Mayor of Wind-gap—but let that pass)—"and, to be sure, if I had a likin' for such kind o' ways, I might have got some of my boys together, and given a good *lamb-basting** to some of the people that wanted to take her away—and so have kept her from their hands by main force, in the first going off. But Maurteen Maher has a way of his own, in the doin' of these things; any fool can fight; but the plan that does what you want without fighting, and in an aisy, quiet way, with a little thought in it, is more to my notion. And so, now, Peggy, *malurna*, tell all about your misfortunes and your scrapes."

A few words are enough to condense Peggy's recital of her adventure. She went homeward from the excelling bonfire at Wind-gap, still agitated even to fear, by the actions, and more particularly by the words, of the strange man of the Inch. At the moment of offence, she did not re-

* Thrashing.

cognise the person of her tormentor, as a universally dreaded individual; but the strange man, upon occasions when he had encountered her near her father's house, at the river-side, had previously expressed himself in a similar way; and Peggy, therefore, concluded that the individual who broke up the enjoyment of her dance on St. John's eve, could be no other than the way-layer of her private walks; for, to aid her opinion, although his face and person were well disguised, some tones of the voice carried conviction to her heart. Therefore she had screamed aloud, during the festivity of the bonfire, but she mentioned no name; and when the Mayor's bailiff and his attendant came to her assistance, she could identify her troublesome neighbour only by pointing in a terrified manner at him; so that when the strange man of the Inch, and with him his most zealous associate, were taken before the judgment-seat of the Mayor of Wind-gap, no one, before his disguise fell off, imagined whom they had to deal with, in the person of the chief prisoner.

Peggy and her father had just retired to rest, after the excitements of the evening, when the door of the cabin was broken open, and four men, disguised in masks and cloaks, bore her forcibly away.

Her eyes were uncovered, so that she could distinguish the road along which she was carried.—She arrived at the house of the Inch, but was not immediately conveyed into it. A door, in one of

the enclosing walls of its premises, opened for her; she entered a garden, and was locked into a turret, or summer-house, as it was called, immediately over the river. In this position, Peggy abandoned herself to despair; when she heard a key turn in the lock of a door opposite to that through which she had been pushed into her unwilling retreat. The well-known voice of the Mayor of Wind-gap called upon her; she committed herself to his care; he locked his own door, as he called it, after him; descended three or four steps to the water; placed Peggy in a very small boat—indeed, a kind of Indian canoe; paddled silently and swiftly across the stream, to the opposite bank; hurried her through a long public promenade, at this time of night quite deserted; walked her through the whole of the town again, one side of the river to the other, and at last deposited her in the safe and respectable place of refuge in which our other friends have found her.

And, indeed, the Mayor of Wind-gap seemed not a little vain of the admiration of his tact, and ingenuity, and prowess, which this history impressed upon the minds of his hearers. Like most ambitious men, he wished to creep on, step by step, through society; and in the same way that he had at first puzzled the brains of the good people of Wind-gap, he seemed now delighted to astonish the comprehension of Anny Kennedy. Nor, if this were truly his view, can it be said that he was unsuccessful; for Anny had received as much

proof of Maurteen's power to counteract, on the occasion of Peggy Carroll's abduction, the wiles and villanies of the strange Man of the Inch, as she could hope to have of his capability, according to his promise, of assisting herself in any case of emergency.

"And, oh! Mayor of Wind-gap," said Grace "whenever we get up in the mornin' from our beds, and whenever we lie down at night, it is we that will always be returnin' our thanks to you, and our prayers too, above, for your good health, and your long reign over Wind-gap!—and if there's ever a thing to do us hurt or harm in the town below, it's to you we'll come, and not to the foolish ould Mayor, that has only the name of a Mayor in that place."

dom stepped over the threshold of his door, even for the purposes of exercise; his domestic habits, so far as they could be known, were gloomy, ascetic, and very frugal: and from this last circumstance—his expenditure being so far within his income, it was conjectured that, apart from the proceeds of his rent roll, he had been annually acquiring personal property to a great amount.

Upon the evening of the day during which the occurrences last related had taken place, George Blundell sought admission at Connor Kennedy's door. His features, generally pale, were now pallid; much suffering was marked upon them, and his movements displayed that languor which proceeds from the mind, and which not the most painful bodily fatigue can occasion. He inquired if he could see Miss Kennedy, and without receiving a direct reply, was shown into an empty parlour. Here he continued for some time alone, now pacing about the apartment, now abruptly flinging himself into a chair, and now standing up again, to repeat his impatient tour round a table, which stood in the middle of the floor. The door at length opened—George Blundell started in great agitation: a blush of eagerness overspread his face, but soon subsided, and his brow darkened with displeasure, as Connor Kennedy half crept in, peering around him, in his usual nervous and suspicious manner.

Connor Kennedy was tall and thin; pale and

sharp-featured; stooped in the shoulders; and characterized by a weak, half-shut, unsteady eye, and by an almost cringing of step and action, which, to many, indicated the mean stealthiness of his nature, and illustrated his capacity for committing the crimes laid to his charge. But, notwithstanding his present appearance, Connor Kennedy was known to have been very handsome in his youth.

George Blundell was not ignorant of the character attributed to the man now before him; and, in reference to the subject which engrossed the lover's mind, had been prepared, from the moment he entered the parlour, to regard him with doubt and suspicion. Yet he bowed low to Mr. Kennedy; and Mr. Kennedy, with a drooping of the eye, seemingly most melancholy, and with his habitual, though tepid smile, which had neither mirth nor happiness in its meaning, bowed even more profoundly, and even humbly, to his visiter.

"I wish you a very good evening, Mr. Blundell," he said, in a voice so low, though it was his common one, that it scarce rose above a whisper, "will you take a chair, and be seated?"

George Blundell silently obeyed. Connor Kennedy took another chair some distance from him, placed the palms of his hands on his knees, to support his drooping person, and fixed his eyes on the carpet.

There was an embarrassed pause, as if both felt unwilling to commence a disagreeable discussion: at length, Mr. Kennedy spoke, but without glancing at the person he addressed.

"I believe, Mr. Blundell, your visit was not particularly meant for me—" yet still he smiled, in his habitually timid way.

"In entering your house, sir," answered George Blundell—"I always feel, of course, the greatest pleasure when we meet; yet, on this particular occasion, I will not deny that my first object was to have the honour of speaking a few words with Miss Kennedy."

"Yes—ay—so I have learned; that is—the servant—that is—I mean—Miss Kennedy—that is—Mr. Blundell—I am sure you will agree with me—one is sometimes obliged to discharge rather unpleasant duties—and in fact, Mr. Blundell—you are yourself aware—that——"

Mr. Kennedy stopped speaking altogether—George Blundell, in expectation of some distant remark or proposition, remained as silent as he. There was another long and disagreeable pause; Mr. Kennedy chose to resume.

"But, Mr. Blundell, although duties are unpleasant—they must be fulfilled, Mr. Blundell;—and it gives me the greatest pain—indeed, Mr. Blundell, it does pain me exceedingly—to be obliged to say—that——"

He stopped a second time, as if at a loss for words, or as if too physically nervous to summon them up at his will, and for his purpose.

"What *do* you mean, Mr. Kennedy?" at length demanded George Blundell in a sonorous voice, tired as well as agitated with his host's hesitation. "Do you wish to tell me that Miss Kennedy will not see me? is that, sir, the intelligence you want to communicate?"

"Exactly so, Mr. Blundell—exactly so——"

"And I thought as much, Mr. Kennedy, when you first came into the room——"

"I am sorry, very sorry, indeed, Mr. Blundell; as by the tone of your voice, I judge that her wish may prove disagreeable to you—but, Mr. Blundell——"

"Well, sir, well?"—demanded George, getting very impatient.

"That is—Mr. Blundell—I hope and trust that you will see yourself—that Miss Anny—should—ought to come to this decision."

"What decision, Mr. Kennedy? tell me really what you mean?"

"Why—Mr. Blundell—you see—by my appearing here for her—that Miss Anny does not wish to see you herself."

"And why, Mr. Kennedy, why?" and George's voice began to rise, and his eyes to open more and more.

"I declare," said Mr. Kennedy, very mildly,

"I have nothing very particular to say upon that point, that is—I suppose—Miss Anny would have come to you, if—that is—if she really wanted to come—that is, Mr. Blundell, I mean to say—but—in the mean time, I beg leave to observe that—I have really nothing to say upon my own account, on the occasion."

"Pooh, sir, you know you represent Miss Kennedy here this evening."

"No, now, indeed, Mr. Blundell—I cannot, in this instance, call myself—Miss Kennedy's representative;—and I beg you will understand that, very distinctly—if—Miss Kennedy acts at all expressively, in not seeing you, during this present visit of yours, it must be, I assure you, according to her own free choice; for I am but—a—a weakly man, unfit for contests of any kind."

"Then, sir, in what light am I to consider you, appearing as you do for Miss Kennedy, if you do not appear as her representative?"

"Mr. Blundell—in that case you will please to consider me as something in the light of the young lady's confidant."

"Sir—I can see only a difference of terms;—Well, sir—apart from the business of this evening, I need not remind you that, as Miss Kennedy's *confidant*, you have always been quite aware of the understanding upon which you allowed my visits to your house?"

"Of course, Mr. Blundell—of course."

"Then, sir, upon what grounds do I so suddenly find my visits unwelcome?"

"I declare, Mr. Blundell, upon no grounds, that—to my own knowledge—I can sufficiently explain, but you may be aware that——"

"Mr. Kennedy," interrupted George, "there is but one word can get us out of our present dilemma; she or you, or both together, have heard something to my disadvantage—have you, or have you not?"

"Why, Mr. Blundell, I declare to you——"

"Have you, or have you not, sir?" repeated George, warmly.

"Oh, now, Mr. Blundell, pray do not agitate yourself; but—perhaps I may as well own to you that something of the kind, though I do not know exactly what, has been spoken of through the house?"

"And what is it?" demanded George.

"Oh—Mr. Blundell—you know I before told you that I did not quite understand its nature."

"Very well, sir—but are you then astonished that I should want to come to the question with Miss Kennedy, if you choose to evade it? Mr. Kennedy," he continued, almost with an air of distraction, "you know, or you ought to know, that my preservation, or destruction, depends upon you."

"Oh, now, young gentleman, do not be so im-

petuous, I pray you; impetuosity often leads to very dreadful consequences."

"I do not intend, Mr. Kennedy, to be impetuous—I should not wish to be so, for your sake—but I plainly see that some slander has done me wrong in this house; and here you come as the only person to meet me beneath its roof; and, now, I only implore you, most anxiously and humbly, to gain me one moment's interview with Miss Kennedy.—Listen to me, sir, a little farther, before you answer;—age must ice my manner, and manacles must confine my limbs, before I could quietly rest one instant under Miss Kennedy's unfavourable opinion."

"I am a man of a weakly constitution, Mr. Blundell; violence always makes me nervous; be patient, my good young gentleman, be patient."

"Mr. Kennedy—I have spent many hours, trying to temper down the very violence of which you speak, and I am sure, I am at last patient, and not violent; but if I am now denied the opportunity of vindicating myself, in Miss Kennedy's opinion, against an unknown—that is against an unadmitted charge, should you wonder, sir, if my naturally hot temper, as you all call it, should cease to be patient?"

"Truly, truly, Mr. Blundell—I do not know how to act."

"Act then, sir, as any man ought, who feels for the real unhappiness of another.—Mr. Ken-

nedy," he continued, becoming, perhaps, absurdly energetic, as he knelt on one knee—"I humble myself to you, as I thought I never could to mortal man, and I implore you, sir, not to permit me to leave this house without the explanation I ask you for!"

Mr. Kennedy glanced upward one instant from the carpet, "Rise, Mr. Blundell, rise, I beseech you, sir——" he touched George's hands, and feeling their resistance to his appeal, again looked into the young man's face; and now so intently, that George from all his previous appreciation of the recluse's character, was struck with the expression of his glance.

"If your heart has not been hardened from your birth, sir, you will pity me," resumed George.

"Oh God forbid, that such a heart, or such a nature, were ever mine!" ejaculated Mr. Kennedy, "But go to your chair, Mr. Blundell, or we can never continue our conversation."—George reseated himself. "Mr. Blundell, I do not bring any charges against you—understand me in that, I beg of you; but candidly do you think—and answer me candidly, I know you will,—that under present circumstances, Miss Kennedy ought to meet you?"

"Ought to meet me, sir? ought to meet me?—but all these words are idle. You, of all men, Mr. Kennedy, should not—but no—I will not retort. I

am hot-headed, sir, if you wish; forgive me. I will be quite candid with you.—I do suspect, notwithstanding all you say, that your opinion has influence over Miss Kennedy—and that you have advised her to deny herself to me this evening; your very manner tells me so; and I can only again beg of you, as the most humble beggar could for a half-penny, to gain me ten minutes' conversation with her."

Mr. Kennedy rose from his chair, much agitated;—he perceived that it was by a great effort that the young man curbed his impassioned feelings.

"Well then, I will go to Anny, Mr. Blundell, and "——

"You will use your influence in my favour? say you will!" cried George, once more impetuously.

"Now, Mr. Blundell, you alarm me; I cannot tell why; but I am not a strong man, and you alarm me!"

"It is not my intention to do so, sir; I would rather again supplicate your compassion in the most humiliating way—but tell me, sir, am I to see Anny? for"—George muttered, or rather growled, "I do not know how I may abide a refusal."

"Well, Mr. Blundell,—if my interference can avail, Anny will come to you; and so, a good

evening—a very good evening to you, Mr. Blundell."

"You promise me, sir, do you not?"

"Why yes, if she come at my bidding, I do promise you—" and Mr. Kennedy timidly bowed himself out of the room.

This was palpably a constrained consent, whether against his conviction of what was right, or from some other cause, we do not say. After his agitated and almost trembling exit, George Blundell fixed his eye upon the door, which he had cautiously closed after him, and strained his ears, listening to every step and noise through the house. A full quarter of an hour elapsed, and still he was alone. At length the door briskly opened; an elderly woman who, as George was aware, filled a confidential situation in the Kennedys' establishment, came courtesying towards him, evidently under the influence of terror. George Blundell frowned again, confronted her, and looked his inquiry.

"My young mistress bid me say to you, sir," hastily began the messenger of bad tidings,—— and she, like her master, hesitated and stopped.

"Say what to me? that she will not come to see me? is that your message?"

"Mr. Connor Kennedy——"

"Go on, woman,—what of him?"

"Why, sir, if Miss Anny came at all, sir, it wouldn't be to her own liking that she'd come."

"But she would come, only for Mr. Kennedy?"

"It isn't all on't, that, sir; but——"

"No matter," interrupted George Blundell, "I see there is equivocation on all hands: tell Mr. Kennedy, and tell Miss Kennedy—but, no; say nothing to them—they shall hear of it in another way." And he hurried out of the house.

CHAPTER IX.

THE morning after this occurrence, Anny Kennedy was formally summoned to a conference with the Mayor of Wind-gap, upon very important business, as the messenger informed her. Immediately descending, she found his worship in the same parlour whence George Blundell had so hastily made his departure the evening before.

"A bright good morning to your handsome face, Miss Anny," he began, smiling very cordially.

"Good morning to you, my honest friend," answered Anny.

"Och! there's a cloud darkening your young brow," continued Maurteen; "and there's a blight stealing on your young heart, and more's the pity; but never give grief the mastery over ye, my purty young crature: it would be a sore thing to see the May-bush withered in its blossoming."

Anny sighed dolefully, but made no other answer.

"If it could be helped, Miss Anny, I'd go a good long way, afore I'd add any thing to your throuble."

"Is it of that evil man at the Inch that you have come to speak to me, good father? I understood from you that we were soon to have more explanation about him?"

"In thruth, then, it is to spake consarning him that I am here to the fore this morning, Miss Anny."

"Go on, then, at once, I beseech you," cried Anny, eagerly.

"Don't give up to greater fear than there is a need for, my purty young lady; the biggest reason why I did not like to open all my mind to you yestherday, was, because something I had to say was for your own self alone."

"Oh! I have not slept last night, thinking and dreaming of him! every time I closed my eyes his disagreeable image was before me."

"People is fools enough to say, Miss Anny,—though I don't think, in my own mind, there's much sense in the saying, that the young girl his look fixes on ought to be on her guard."

"What can you mean?" demanded Anny, slowly; "do you suppose he would dare to——"

"In thruth I don't, *Ma lanna*," resumed Maurteen, as she paused, answering her unexpressed meaning;—"but, Miss Anny, 'tis an ould maxim with me, this many a year, to make provision against the worst that can come round; and when

I go according to the maxim, my mind, and myself, of course, along with the mind, then jogs on asy and quiet, ever and always. But it's my hope and belief that nothing like the worst, or half of the worst, can come next, or nigh, you; for, as I tould you, undher the roof of my counsel's house, on Wind-gap hill, I have the power to make that man, wicked as he is, and much as he frightens other people, give you up into my hands, even though you might be in his."

"Yes, I remember you said so."

"Well, my purty Miss Anny, I could say no more till we were together, and nobody by. Now I'll say that more—d'ye see this paper, Miss Anny?" he continued, holding before her eyes something like a sealed letter.

"I certainly do see it," assented Anny.

"The writing that is inside of this I penned down with my own hands; and there's no one in the world wide knows what the writing manes, but myself only; and the writing is for you, Miss Anny."

"But what *are* the contents of the paper?" she asked.

"That you are not to know, my purty lady: but I'll tell you what use you're to make of it; only, afore I do that, you must give me a vow; ay, as binding a vow as if you swore upon the blessed book!"

"This is very strange! what is the nature of the vow?"

"You must vow to me before the good heaven that loves you, and takes care of you, my purty child,—that no eye but your own shall ever see this paper, even the outside of it, barring the time comes to put it to a right use; you must vow to me that you will never open it yourself, nor give it any other to be opened, barring you give it to the only one I penned it down for; and you must vow to me, too, that if a time never comes to hand it over to that one, you will return it to me, safe and sound, as I will give it to you."

"And who is it for, and to whom am I to deliver it? and when am I to deliver it?"

"It is for the sthrange man o' the Inch, my purty lady, and no other eye but his is to see it, outside or inside; and no hand but his is to touch it, except your own: and you are never to deliver it to him until you're alone with him, much against your will, and in some fear and trembling of him; and when it's come to the last moment with you, and when no door is left open for you; and it's then you are to deliver it to him, with mannerly compliments from Maurteen Maher, the Mayor of Wind-gap."

"My good man, how you confound and terrify me! is it indeed possible that you can calculate such a situation for me?"

"The Lord above keep you far from it!" answered Maurteen; "and in thruth, no, Miss Anny, I don't talk of it at all as a thing that's sartain sure to happen; and you'd obleege me by not

given' yourself distress by taking me up in a mistake;—but I tould you my maxim,—'fore-warned, fore-armed.' Be ready for an evil day, and an evil day will most likely keep from you. So, take the paper,—it won't hurt or harm you; it won't bite, or bruise, or burn you. And there's another maxim I go by,—that as long as there's a purse in the chest, the owner of it needn't go without his dinner barrin' he's mighty fanciful intirely."

"Well, then, give me the paper."

"Give *me* the vow first, my purty hony."

"The vow! I really forget it now."

"Well, and it won't take much breath or time to put it into your head again; and Maurteen, in a most distinct tone, repeated the terms of the proposed engagement.

"Put your little white hand over the good little heart that's beating in your body, and promise me, as you're God's own child, and hope to find favour in his sight, that you will observe every word of that vow."

Anny Kennedy performed the action, and gave, solemnly, the solemn promise required of her.

"Here, then, Miss Anny, take the paper into your keeping at last; and remember, of all things, that it comes back to my hand, if the time never falls out for giving it as 'tis directed. Cast your eye over the writen' on the outside."

Anny did observe the superscription on the rudely-folded and clumsily-sealed packet, hoping

to learn the name, at least, of a dreaded person; but she only read, to "The sthrange man of the Inch," inscribed on the official document in very stiff and formal characters.

"Hide it, Miss Anny, and hide it up safe; who knows but it may be worth more nor a sack of goold to you, if the need comes to part with it!"

"Heaven defend me!" resumed Anny, still gazing on the strange credentials in her favour; "it is very alarming, that a man of sense, like you, Maurteen Maher, should really think such precaution necessary on my behalf."

"There is an ounce or so of sense in our head, we b'lieve, according to what the neighbours say; but, have a reliance on me, Miss Anny; remember what I have done for Peggy Carroll, and 'twill go hard if I don't do more for your sake. Depend upon it, I'll keep my little *Birdeen* flyin' to and fro, for the bare life; and I'll twist the neck of him,—and, by coorse, the head follows the neck, —if he does'n't do his duty by you and by me. When your affairs ought to keep me waken', there will be no sleep on my eyes, any how."

Anny still much puzzled and alarmed, renewed her expression of thanks to his mysterious mayorship.

"Well," continued Maurteen, rubbing down his knee with his hand; "now that we have that matther settled, sure there's another little thing I want to be spaking about, Miss Anny; for it wasn't in-

tirely on the head o' the paper and the sthrange man, that I made so bould as to sit down all alone wid you, this morning."

"I know you are my friend, Maurteen," answered Anny, "and I will attend carefully to whatever you have to say to me."

"Listen, then, Miss Anny. The evening o' yestherday was a very fine evening about Windgap; the smell o' the new hay would have refreshed your heart, young and fresh as it is, already, not to say as if it was as ould as mine; and there wasn't a breath of wind stirring the laves upon the threes; and the sun, when he was setting, made the sky, to the west, look as rosy as the blooming on your own soft cheek. Well, when I am a walking down by the river-side on such an evening as that was, with my fishing-rod in my hand, I have no envy to the greatest king that ever sat upon a throne. Of a surety, there isn't over much care to my lot,—I give thanks for the same: but whenever care or throuble does come to me, it goes away, somehow, from my side, as I saunther along by the banks of the paceful wather; and it's a thruth, Miss Anny, take it from my lips, that a sthroll along that grassy bank, about the hour o' the sunset will do more than make a sorrowful heart happy; it will make a happy one happier—ay, and still more than that, 'twill smoothen the wrinkle on the angry

man's brow, and it will stale out of the breast of the worldly man, in a long sigh, his envy, or his ill-will to his neighbour.

"Well, again, Miss Anny; we had a fine soft summer's evening, the last evening that's gone by; there were children laughing out loud and playing about on the hill-side, and there were ould people a-sitting down to rest themselves; and they looked for all the world as if the evening of their life was the evening that the heavens sent shining and smiling all around them in pace, and in quiet, and in pleasure. But there was one man, Miss Anny, and he was a young man, into the bargain; and he ought to have been singing with the birds, and jumping through the grass like the grasshoppers; but he hurried along as if he was runnin' from himself; and he was heedless of what was givin' the heart's joy to all others, and his brow was as dark as if a tempest had been peltin' on it; and, when I looked upon him, I thought he was the more and more angry, because the sunny sky did not look miserable, like himself. Can you give a guess, Miss Anny, who that young man was?"

"Indeed I—I really do not know," Anny blushed and stammered.

"Well, and I won't ask of you to make the guess, my purty lady. I'll only tell you myself. That young man was Masther George Blundell. I went along in his steps when he thought no eye was on him; and he flung himself down on the grass;

and he threw out his arms from him, and he moaned, and he sobbed so pitifully that it would put affliction on your young heart to listen to him; and afther I watched him some time, he bounced upon his feet, and he looked with an evil eye upon the deep wather; and there was a sickness came over me, Miss Anny; for I guessed his meaning."

"What!" cried Anny, starting up with clasped hands, and looking even more pale and terrified than ever she had done at the strange man of the Inch.

Maurteen did not very immediately reply; at length he condescended to rejoin—"No, Miss Anny—my honey child; no; he did not make away with himself that time, praises be given. I went up to him, and I spoke to him. At first, he was angered against me; he commanded me to continue on my way; he said he knew nothing about me, and that he wanted to know nothing about me, and that he liked to be left alone. But I didn't quit him, Miss Anny; I spake softly to him, with a little sense too, may be; indeed, and in thruth, I spoke to him like one who had a feeling for him, and I had the feeling for him: and we sat down at last, on the soft, sunny bank; and he took my two ould, hard, withered hands in his: and he tould me his griefs, and then he cried like a foolish little child, and I cried too, like a more foolish and a bigger one,—just to keep him company, I suppose."

"God bless you, good man!" murmured Anny.

"Miss Anny, there is a doom before that poor boy; and he must meet it, and soon too: but if he gets bravely through it, there's happiness in store for him at last,—and for some one else with him into the bargain."

"A doom, Maurteen? what doom?"

"Och! I said what was wrong—but the word came from my mouth without thinking, and I can't tell any more, only this; he was near his doom yestherday evening, but the heavens forbid that his death should be laid to you, Mavourneen!"

"His death! his death, laid to me?"

"Masther Blundell is a youth that has hot blood round his heart, Miss Anny; with some people the grief that falls on them falls like the spring shower, and they're the better for it when it has passed away; but this isn't the way with Masther George: the grief comes to him like a winther tempest. His love is a scorching fire; and I'm thinking that if ever his hatred falls on any one, 'twill be a witherin' blast. And so, Miss Anny, while we were sitting together by the river-side, he made acknowledgment to me, that when I came up, this thought was tempting him to take one good jump into it: for he was disthracted, like, beeause you refused to see him, and to listen to him, Miss Anny; there was grief

upon him, before he knocked at your dour, yestherday evening', but when your word turned him away from it, it grew too much intirely for his nature to bear, although another body might be able to submit, like a Christhin."

"But, Maurteen, I think I was right in refusing him, yesterday evening."

"I won't say all out, but that you did the right thing, Miss Anny; because all looks black against him; only, that is the very rason why your anger came the sooner and the heavier on his heart. It is a great misfortune when the world turns against a man; but when our nearest and dearest turn with the world, och! my purty child, that's the heart-scalding, in downright, good arnest."

"Are you sure, asked Anny, unconsciously wrought upon by Maurteen's plausible pleadings, "that none of the wicked idea of yesterday evening remains in his mind?"

"I am, my purty young lady; he promised me that he'd pluck it up by the roots, and throw it from him—and I have a reliance on any promise out of George Blundell's lips. But I made him a promise, in return, howsomever; I promised him that I'd gain your lave and license for him to come to you, all alone, and to sit with you, all alone; that he may tell you something; and when I gave him my hand in pledge that I'd bring this about, he wanted to go down upon his knees to thank me, and to pray for me; and in thruth I was

ashamed to behould a gentleman like him goin' to demean himself before the likes o' me."

"Mr. Maurteen Maher," remarked Anny, now shaking off in a degree the effects of his worship's oratory, "it is my opinion that you might have condescended to consult me, as a party slightly concerned, before you gave that promise, and that pledge, so very confidently."

"Not a bit, my darlin' young lady—I knew well that you'd have the pity, if nothing else, in your heart for him, this morning; and that you'd give him the time and the place to say whatever he can in his own defence, in your hearing; for I knew you used to be just in your mind, as well as good in your nature; and you owed me allegiance, more betoken, as the Mayor o' Wind-gap; for though you are now livin' in the bailiwick of that poor soft-headed crature, in the next sthreet, you passed the airliest and some of the happiest of your days undher my rule, when you were fosther-child to Juff Carroll's good woman, that's now no more, and fosther-sister, into the bargain, to little Peggy Carroll, the purtiest and the best girl I govern over, except yourself, Miss Anny, and that I saved for you only the day afore yestherday, because she let me take my own way; the same that I ask you to let me do, this present moment."

"Well, Mr. Mayor," answered Anny, gloomily miling at this transcendently ingenious persona-

tion—"I yield you my allegiance, at least; but still I am convinced that I ought not, under present circumstances, to hold intercourse with Mr. George Blundell. Apart from the undefended charges against him, he has given me new cause for displeasure and estrangement; yesterday evening, here in this very parlour, he insulted my guardian, Mr. Kennedy."

"My darlin', purty young crature, the scalded heart makes a fool of the poor young head. When you refused to come down to him, the boy did not know what he was sayin' or doin'; moreover, how do you know but what he wants to say to you, quite alone, between yourselves, may have something to do with them charges you spake of?"

"It would be wrong—very wrong to see him," deliberated Anny.

And what has farther been predicated of the woman who deliberates? Maurteen Maher knew, though he had never read the poet's line;—and when he saw that he had thus virtually gained his point, he did not go on arguing after convincing; he did not enter into the question of the propriety or impropriety of granting the boon he solicited, he only appealed to her compassion, representing the consequences likely to ensue, should she persist in her refusal; and finally, he obtained her full consent to a private interview with George Blundell; and left the house to communicate to his young protegé, his good tidings, with as brisk a step, and in as high spirits, as if he had succeeded

in gaining, after a hard battle, some great personal favour for himself.

Declare, oh Rochefaucauld! how much, or how little of poor old Maurteen Maher's vanity, in his diplomatic talents, mingled with his feelings of justice and of benevolence, on this occasion!

CHAPTER X.

It is evident that the circumstances under which the young people once again saw each other alone, were embarrassing. Anny felt it to be her duty, in the fullest sense a woman can do so, distinctly and unequivocally to dismiss George Blundell; for as she has herself said, the associate of a desperate libertine, nay, the partaker of his guilt, ought not for an instant to continue to be to her even as an acquaintance. Yet, poor Anny's heart sickened at this conviction; and final separation did not promise a less severe pang, because it became necessary to inflict it on herself.

Anny was seated, of course, at a small work-table, with an open book upon it, when George Blundell entered the room, the same, by the way, in which Mr. Kennedy had given him an audience. Immediately withinside the doorway, the young

man paused, and looked deeply at her. Their eyes met. Anny had never seen her lover's face under the expression of every-day merriment; she had beheld it, indeed, subdued into the gentle tenderness which her smiles could always induce; nay, when the fulness of his joy glowed in every feature she had called it in her own mind more than sunny radiant indeed, with the consciousness of a delightful interchange of undoubting affection. And, once before this day, she had even witnessed it clouded with suffering. But during the look which they now gave each other, the deep-seated agony expressed by George Blundell's countenance shocked her. As he advanced, she trembled, and was unable to rise from her chair, in the formal, yet easy, manner which she had planned.

George Blundell's words came in slow and melancholy, yet not inharmonious, cadences on her ear, like the music of a dirge.

"I perceive," he said, "my presence is painful to you; and I must therefore be the more grateful for the charity shown me, in this permission to wait on you. However, as it is very probably the last time I shall so afflict you, I crave your indulgent hearing to what I have now to say. You reproach me with——"

"Mr. Blundell, it is not I who reproach you; nor is it my intention to do so even now; but—" she hesitated.

"What would you say? go on, dear Anny—but I am too bold in addressing you as familiarly as

you have hitherto allowed me to do—am I not? I did not intend it, however, and I cannot help it; there would be something so hopeless in the sound of your name, uttered by my voice with a merely polite title before it, that my tongue refuses to make the attempt. But I ask your pardon—you stopped short in what you wished to say.

"Mr. Blundell, can you prove—*fully prove* your innocence of the things laid to your charge!"

"Anny Kennedy, I cannot," he answered slowly and miserably. "I can but make assertions to you."

"Then, sir," she resumed, rallying into spirit, "you will yourself admit the necessity of an immediate and final separation between us."

"Alas, Anny! you can find no one more ready to make that admission than I am—I do not blame you, Anny; far from it; I only blame my own fate, when I agree in the justice of the wretched sentence you pass upon me; when I myself declare that it is fit and proper you should draw back from me."

Now, although Anny had quite resolved to be stern and unflinching in her decree, it is singular enough that this ready acquiescence in it did not fail to pique her. As a matter of strict propriety, our gentle Anny determined upon dismissing her lover for ever; but her pride, and perhaps her vanity, were wounded at the thought that he allowed her manacles to drop too willingly from his hands; an argument, by the way, which did not

show that her own fetters were as loose as she might have chosen to imagine they were.

"So, sir, we have quickly come to an understanding; and what necessity is there for a prolonged conference on this subject?"

Anny was now able to stand up.

"Do not so suddenly turn from me, Anny; permit me to fulfil the purpose for which I have intruded on you—I sought this meeting with one particular object in view; pray sit down again—or—you tacitly refuse me an opportunity for uttering a last word to you."

"Well, sir, for that alone—" and Anny resumed her judgment-seat with the severe dignity of a young "second Daniel."—

"I will begin by saying, that I knew I never could be worthy of your love——"

"Indeed, Mr. Blundell? and should I then feel complimented that you have attempted—particularly since we all know the recent occurrences that surround you—to call forth my affection?"

"When I sought your love, my own dearest Anny, there was no stain upon me—I could, therefore, not have doubted myself on that account. But this one point we will defer, if you please. Now I repeat, you act as you ought to do in receding from me. But, although I admit the justice and the necessity of my rejection, believe me, I shall experience no self-reproach in the agony to which for my life it must doom me. And Anny, dearest, it would be impossible I could live at all—

indeed, life would be too oppressive a burden for me—did I not entertain the hope that your good opinion, your esteem, and your compassion, will accompany me through my despair. No—indeed, Anny; nothing can sooth the peculiar misery of my lot, except the certainty that not only you do not think me the villain the world would represent me to be, but that you will pity me as the victim of that cold world's hasty opinion."

"Mr. Blundell, you have said you could give me nothing but assertions; well, sir, *do* you assert yourself to be innocent of,—I must call them,—the crimes you are accused of?"

"Innocent! innocent! my beloved Anny, innocent!" he exclaimed.

"Then why are you the companion of that degraded man? why have I seen you in his company? why have I heard words pass between you? Answer me," cried Anny, in rising hope.

"Anny," he replied, "you yourself have accused me, and I have been publicly accused, in this town, of having been a party to the abduction of your foster-sister, but, so help me Heaven! I am as guiltless of that charge as yourself can be. As to the words you overheard, I was certainly presumptuous enough to speak of you, but without levity; without——"

"And you spoke of me to that man? you could mix up my name with his? how can you be connected with him, and still expect to be known to

me? Mr. Blundell, the recollection of that is sufficient to call on me, really, to end this irksome interview."

"All will be best understood, Anny, when you have heard a plain story; the story I am come here to tell."

"You have taken some time to introduce it, sir," she remarked, (little vixen.)

"That's very probable," said George; "but now, not to tire you farther, I begin it, and, I hope, with it my vindication."

"At my tenth year, I recollect myself living in a peasant's cottage. I was brought up with the children of the family, and after the same manner in which they were, except that I experienced a more imbittered infancy and childhood. It was not concealed from me that a paternal roof did not cover me; but where I was to seek that roof no one would tell me. Before I was ten years old, I sometimes used to ask who were my father and mother? but the unkindly people at the cottage only laughed, at first, at my inquiries, or beat me for making them; until, at length, when I had tormented them beyond patience, they replied, to my young ears, that I was a child of whom my parents were ashamed, and whom they brought up for charity. In fact, Anny, I was considered as an incumbrance, in even that lowly house; and worse, they branded me with a disgraceful name: I was ill-treated by the old; I was scorned by the

young. My nature was made morose, my temper sour, and often savage. My tender days were spent in wretchedness; and never since have I been able wholly to free my mind of the premature gloom and bitterness cast upon it by those early scenes.

"One lad only, in my neighbourhood, treated me with kindness; and I have often since thought that the heart within me must have become dead, as a kind of moral petrifaction, but that it expanded to him, in return for his gentleness to me. Upon one occasion, when some four or five other boys were at play, and when I looked on, as was my custom, without playing with them, my generous friend was attacked, upon some misunderstanding, by a lad, stronger and older than himself. I took his quarrel upon me; and, although my antagonist was also my physical superior in every way, I had not time to count odds. Before that day, I had scarce ever stood up, on my own account, against an insult, because the consciousness of my humiliating position weighed me down like lead. But," continued George Blundell, interrupting himself, "I fatigue you, Anny?"

"No, no, no;—pray, go on," she said.

"Well, I became the conqueror on this occasion; but I was sorely bruised and battered; and the little fellow, for whom I had fought, attended on me to cure my wounds. The other boys envied me for my success, and, still retaining their male-

volent uncharitableness against me, would provoke me into fresh quarrels. My blood got up, and I offered to encounter them all, one by one; but, out of their virtuous detestation, I suppose, they, at last, fell upon me, nearly all together, and I could only defend myself as well as I was able, against their united blows.

"During this unequal contest, I was unconscious that a stranger had been looking on, an unbiassed witness of the tyranny practised upon me, and of my vain efforts to resist it. But that stranger, to my astonishment, suddenly became my protector, judiciously using his cane to disencumber me of my cowardly assailants.

"When they had retired, and that we were alone, he inquired my birth and parentage. At first, I would not reply to him at all; gradually he drew reluctant and tearful, though true, answers from me. At my account, I saw him start and frown; and then he took my hand, and asked me to lead him to the house where I resided. I did so,—we entered the mean abode. I was in rags, and otherwise very badly taken care of. I heard my mysterious protector disputing angrily with the proprietor of my churlish place of refuge. I heard my name mentioned, and understood that I was the subject of their debate. Finally, the stranger called me—his son! his lawful son, he said I was! Oh, Anny! when I heard this, I cannot tell you how my young heart exulted! and well

do I remember the boyish assumption of lofty demeanour which I put forward, after *I* had summoned sufficient courage to call *him* father. Little show of fatherly kindness did he then afford me; but his mere countenancing the poor despised boy was sufficient to arouse all the dormant fondness of my nature for him; and when he told me that his name was Blundell, and that I must forget that by which I had hitherto been called, (the name of the family with whom I had been living) and assume his, I thought myself absolutely ennobled.

"My father immediately had me conveyed into a neighbouring village, and there he clothed me well, and fed me daintily; at his departure, which shortly after occurred, he placed me at a respectable school; and, two years afterwards, in my twelfth year, I was removed, at his command, though he did not then come back to me, to the college of this town. At our first meeting, he had told me he was a merchant, possessing great wealth in a foreign country; that he had left Ireland, while yet young, in consequence of my mother's death; that he had no child but me; and that I was to be the sole inheritor of a large fortune. I never questioned the truth of this story; and the liberal supplies of money regularly remitted to me, in his name, seemed fully to prove it.

"For many years I did not again behold my parent; not, in fact, till about three months ago. Then, however, Anny, I received a message to at-

tend him, at a house which he had just taken, in the neighbourhood of this city; and now, Anny, do you begin to pity me?"

"Are you at liberty to declare who he is?" asked Anny, growing very pale.

"I will declare it to *you*, Anny, at any risk," answered George Blundell, most sorrowfully, tears trickling from his eyes—"The strange man of the Inch is my father."

"Dear George, I do—I do, indeed, pity you," resumed Anny, suddenly extending her hand, and more than responding to the measure of his tears.

"God bless you, Anny," cried George, as he almost reverently touched her hand with his lips—"but you perceive at once, that on this wretched fact, I rest my vindication against the foul calumnies cast upon me."

"I understand it clearly, dear George."

"You may have overheard us speaking together in the lane, near his house. I was conscious that you must have known of the imputations in question; and I was praying of him to permit me to confide to you the secret of my birth, in order that you might understand why I had been discovered in his company at the bonfire. He sternly and threateningly repelled my prayer; but I now make the disclosure, in the teeth of his commands; because it is of less consequence to me to inherit his wealth, did he possess the produce of all the mines hid in the bowels of this round world, than, for

one single day, to sink in your estimation. And I sought a private interview with you, because I durst not tell my secret to any other person."

"He wishes, then, that your consanguinity shall remain unknown?" demanded Anny.

"He does. Three months ago, when, for the second time in my life I met him, we had not been many minutes together before he gave me to understand as much; adding, that the fact of even ordinary intimacy between us must be hidden from the world, and that, whenever we saw each other, it must be without witnesses, or else personally disguised."

"Did you ask his reasons for this unaccountable mystery?"

"I did, Anny—over and over—in vain. I found him a rough, peremptory man; he said the measure was necessary; was his will and pleasure, and that he should be obeyed; nor did he fail to remind me that even for my very bread I was at his mercy, and that disobedience on my part, and abandonment on his, should be cause and consequence."

There is self-evidence in the accents of truth; there is a blandness about sincerity, which is its own guarantee against doubt and disbelief in the hearts of those to whom it addresses itself.—Anny fully credited the story she heard, and her looks and manner towards the narrator were almost as kind as ever.

"Anny, behold the situation in which I am placed," the young man continued. "Although a stern and a dictatorial father, he has been a kind and liberal one to me, ever since the moment he rescued me from poverty and degradation; and, exclusive of my gratitude to him for having given me a station in the world, with education, and means to support it, it is my creed, my religious, conscientious creed, that, except for the commission of an evil act, we are bound to yield honour and obedience to—no matter what may be his private character,—a parent. To you, indeed, Anny, I break the commands laid upon me, in the present instance, because I feel, because I am sure, that the loss of your esteem were a warrant for self-destruction. But you will guard my secret; it is unnecessary for me to remark that you will——"

"I will, George Blundell," she said, "since I ought to do so for your interests."

"Putting completely out of view all worldly interests," he resumed, "I am bound to keep my father's secret, because he has commanded me to do so—am I not, Anny?"

"I should think so," she replied, though with a little hesitation, "yet in what fearful difficulties does it involve you!"

"Yes, Anny; I must be content to bear even infamy, while I do my duty."

"'Tis all very strange, and very unfortunate,

dear George—may I ask you one question? do you think that public report wrongs your father?"

"I have dared to speak with him on the subject—he says he is not guilty of the things laid to his charge—he has stormed and raved at me for supposing the contrary to be the case; and, he adds, that his necessarily mysterious mode of life has subjected him to the gossip of the censorious and foolish vulgar, and that the misdeeds of others are undeservedly heaped upon him."

"Do you believe him?" again questioned Anny.

"Oh! that I could answer you that I did, Anny—but alas! alas! facts tending to disprove his words have come to my knowledge; deep, deep, in my bosom, I feel a horrid misgiving that report speaks truly of him; and that my father, *my father*, Anny, is a man of evil ways. And, taking this to be the fact—supposing it for an instant to be the fact, observe, Anny—observe how I am situated—as I am, I must either submit to be considered as the accomplice of a man who, in this little quarter of the world, is openly called a desperado—I must do this, not admitting the connexion of father and son between us; or, admitting it, I must abandon him, and say to the world, 'You are all right! this is the bravo and the evil man—' and, to save myself from social disgrace, I, his son, cast him off!"—again the young man became deeply affected and silent.

"Fearful, indeed, dear George," said Anny, again giving her hand.

"And what should I gain even by this last course? what should even you gain, my adored Anny, supposing my lot and yours to go hand in hand, after it? why, I gain nothing but the base reputation of being the son of a depraved and detested individual; and you, nothing but the sharing of that reputation—if, indeed, I could ask you to encounter it. But I am here, at present, to tell you that I will not ask you to encounter it; to tell you that George Blundell's heart will eat itself away, in hopeless agony, before he asks you to change, for the worse, your present position of honour, of good and of virtue."

"Thank you, George—thank you, dear, dear George," sobbed Anny.

"No—dearest—I would not afford to the world, even at the risk of all my own worldly happiness, the opportunity to point one little finger against you; yet, you see to whichever side I turn, that world has the power, and indeed, according to its own laws, the right to scorn me. Oh, Anny, Anny, I have been foolishly proud of my own good name! and I have exulted in the consciousness of possessing, from the hand of God, a mind stored with many of the treasures which the poet, the historian, and the sage, offered to me for the gathering! Yes, Anny, and I have idolized the lovely forms of nature, and the lovelier features of virtue:

all displayed before me by the hand of that God; and I have turned with loathing from (I will only call it now) the disagreeable front of vice—and yet, at last, to be, without fault of mine, levelled with the vicious; to be classed with those minds which are made up but of a mass of sluggish matter, or of mere matter of a worse kind; to be classed with those who can laugh when they commit sin and outrage—and, by the indulgence of habits equally common to them and to the terminable brute, plodding with prone visage over the earth—who live themselves with that brute—nay, sink below him!—Oh Anny, dearest Anny, this is affliction, indeed!"

"It is indeed, dear George," she said, in a voice of deep commiseration; "but, do you not think that you at present express yourself as if the mere name of virtue, and as if the mere reputation of high attainment, were equally important as those qualities themselves? do you not, in the present instance, seem to set as high a value upon the shadow as upon the substance?"

"You speak to me," answered George, "as you have always done, my own dear Anny, like a soothing, and yet a correcting, angel. I do not know what to say farther. I will, however, recur to one thing that I glanced at, when we first began this conversation. You remember I told you that from the very commencement of our acquaintance,

I felt I never could be worthy of your affection; and indeed, Anny, that's true; for there was about you a something of nature, and of goodness, and of purity, which surrounded me like a clear spring atmosphere—giving me the power to admire and to enjoy, but finding me deficient in any equivalent return. And it was therefore only that I always feared I could never obtain your love. But when I did obtain it! Oh! what a change came over me!—what a change for earthly happiness! all that, however, has passed away. I may still continue to believe that you love me; but, as I have more than once said, I *must*, for your own dear, dear sake, reject that love, even though you were about to renew its promise to me. You shall not, Anny, pass along the streets of this town, and encounter a single human being who could say of you, 'That is the wife of the son of the bravo.' Anny, I do not yet understand my father; and in this avowal, perhaps, exists the full force of my present despair. For, Anny, disreputable as we all know him to be, here, in this neighbourhood, I have deeper fears of him. I have fears that extend beyond this place; nay, beyond our native country: I have fears of him, that I dare not express even to myself! and therefore, Anny, I say over again, and I say it more decidedly than ever, from this moment you can have nothing to do with me—you *must* have nothing to do with me, except

the affording me your full belief in my innocence, and in all the facts I have submitted to you; and then your full pity for my future lot—when, in consequence of those facts, and indeed, even of that innocence, I shall be for ever separated from you."

George Blundell, who had been standing up, during the latter part of his speech, sunk down exhausted and spiritless on a chair.

Anny had shed tears during his recital—at present she did not weep. She looked upon her old friend with uncurbed admiration; with admiration of his sentiments, of his principles, and, we fear, indeed, of the graceful energy of his expression of them, as well as of the alternate flashing and sinking of his bold manly eye. Even after he had ceased to speak, she seemed to listen to him. In an instant, however, she leaned her forehead upon her hand, and, half turning from him, bent herself towards the table; the deep-black, glossy ringlets that had previously half-covered her throat and neck, now hanging perpendicularly and veiling her countenance. The young pair were for some time silent. At length, Anny quickly raised her head; tossed her hair back again upon her shoulders, and spoke; at first, in a tremulous voice, then firmly, and eventually with intense pathos.

"George—" she said, and the young man bent eagerly towards her—"I give full belief and cre-

dit to every word that you have spoken in your vindication——"

"May God bless you, Anny, for that word!"

"And I think it necessary to state my full belief as a kind of necessary preface to what I must farther declare. I have endeavoured to follow a certain train of thought, and as you have been candid, and have expressed yourself most distinctly towards me, I may surely take up the same tone towards you. Dearest George—you sought my love—I gave it to you; and when I did so, no thought of mine was influenced by worldly considerations. Indeed, George, in it you had a gift as unsophisticated, as warm, and yet as pure a gift, as ever a young girl gave to man, while, for the first time, yielding up her heart's affections. I am not ashamed to say, nor do I fear to flatter you, when I declare that I bestowed that love upon virtue; upon high-mindedness; upon talent; upon genius; to say nothing of personal recommendation, or of your most sincere attachment to me. Nay, hear me out, George Blundell, for, I repeat, I do not speak to flatter you. Before these last few black days, nothing could have changed me towards you, except a discovery of your being less worthy than I supposed you to be of my deeply-trusting partiality—since then I have doubted. But, upon this day I discover nothing that can give me a disagreeable impression of you—and,

therefore, I am, as I have been ever towards you, dearest George."

George sprang from his seat, and was getting himself into some dilemma of grateful gallantry.

"No, no—" she said, stand up—take a chair and sit by me if you will—" (what *did* he do?") "I have now candidly told you the opinions of my mind, and the feelings of my heart; and if they are any consolation to you, remember them, and accept of them. But I cannot disguise from myself, mean time, that a woman has other duties than those of love to perform. I must not too hastily sink myself in the world's esteem—there, dear George, I agree with you, though you have manfully anticipated me. No; you are right—no—we must not be hasty—you have said that, on my account, you would not enter the world with me, an object of neglect—I say for you, that I will not allow you, from this hour, any opportunity to tempt me to do so;—while the present cloud hangs over you, we must cease to be even private acquaintances—But rest satisfied with this assurance, I have loved you for your own qualities—and I will not now change towards you, because unmerited misfortune has placed you in questionable circumstances. I will not, now—I will not, ever. I will love none other but you; I will wed none other but you. Brighter days must surely beam on us at last, and leave us free to smile at the social usages which at present doom our separa-

tion. I cannot, will not, believe, but that you will soon become enabled to reassert yourself in your own true character. But if," continued Anny, "and let my last words sink deepest in your memory, if time does *not* stand your friend; if you are too long kept down by the necessity of your strange lot, then, George Blundell, come to me, again, and again call me your own, own, Anny."

CHAPTER XI.

The house at the Inch, the scene of the tragedy with which we are becoming more particularly acquainted, was an old family mansion, built in the graceless style of architecture pretty generally adopted in Ireland in the beginning of Elizabeth's reign; a square structure, of which each side terminated in a pointed and towering gable, while each gable was surmounted by a formidable chimney. At that side, where the stone-jambed, massive hall door gave entrance to the dwelling, the windows had been placed with some degree of uniform arrangement; but at its other sides they were up and down, here and there, great and small; as if, after the first construction of the house, whim or necessity, rather than pre-concerted design, had dictated their relative positions,

The walls were very massive, and all the principal rooms wainscoted.

Into the largest room of the second story of this famous house, we now enter upon a visit to its as famous present proprietor.

The furniture around us is old, lumbering, and much decayed. The walls and floor of the apartment itself have been but indifferently reclaimed from a former state of almost dilapidation; and, although four large wax tapers burn on a carved table in its centre, there is the uncomfortable air of a mixture of luxury and unfitness, of ornament and blemish, nay, even of the want of order, or of common attention to order, visible at every side.

The strange man of the Inch sat alone at the massive carved table. A half-drained silver goblet, richly chased, was before him. The bottle from which he had filled it, and another, which he had previously emptied, were to his hand; and a delf mug, with a handle near the neck—one of those called a "gray beard"—stood in the middle of the board.

An embroidered purple velvet cap, sat, not inelegantly, on his head. He was regaling himself with a gigantic pipe, which, after many convolutions, rested on the floor at his feet; it was, indeed, a machine of exotic fashion, and formed, in the eyes of his neighbours, one of the objects which, taken as appendages to him, challenged their curiosity and inquiry, if not their fears. His brow

was closely knitted over his deep, black eye, as if, even in solitude, it would hide and concentrate its own meaning; while, ever and anon, he puffed from his curving lip, the vapour of perfumed tobacco.

The door of the apartment slowly, and, it might be said, sneakingly opened. The strange man turned towards it his keen, searching eye. A tall and bulky fellow, enveloped in a large, loose wrapper of blue frieze, which disguised his person, stood beyond the threshold.

"So, Bourke!—is that you?—Advance," said the strange man, sonorously.

His clumsy visiter, plodding forward with a heavy step, removed his slouched hat from his bushy brow.

"Sit you down, sit you down, Bourke," continued the strange man, pointing to a seat distant from the table;—"Sit down, and make love to 'gray beard.'"

"*Dhar-a-lourse!** an' who'll say it isn't the mouth-wather that hasn't its match?"—the man remarked, after he had applied the mug to his lips, and gulped a sufficient quantity of its contents:—"An' I'll let out the thruth; the love an' the likin' that I have for it, *bates Bannachar*"†—and, to exemplify his statement, he once more pressed his lips to the lips of the "gray beard." He then rested the vessel on the table, embracing it

* An imprecation. † Goes beyond expression.

with his great hands, as if he claimed it as his own, smacking his mouth, and grinning hugely and hideously.

The strange man smoked on, without a change of countenance, as if abstractedly, or indifferently, or perhaps contemptuously, though without the expression of that feeling. Bourke fixed his large gray eyes upon him, and, by degrees, also grew serious. There was silence for some time. At length the strange man's glance suddenly encountered that of the other, and in a loud, sharp voice, while he struck his foot upon the floor, he as suddenly demanded—"Bourke! is there a traitor among ye?"

"By the gor," answered the fellow, collectedly, although at first he had been rather startled—"not to my knowin,' or to the knowledge of me, masther."

"Not to your knowing!—Are you not certain?—positively certain, one way or the other?"

"I'll take book-oath on it,—an' may this *lauchy** liquor be my pison, afore I close an eye, if I'm tellin' you a word of a lie, at the prasent time."

"And you have not discovered who pirated the girl from the summer-house, in the garden, where she had been so safely stowed away?"

"No, Masther; we lost all marks and tokens of

* Lovely—generous.

her in the town. But wait a bit, wait a bit; all is not lost that's in danger; and what a body can't see a good way off to-day becase there's bad weather between a body and it, a body may be able to see to-morrow, when the sun takes away the clouds, and lets a body's eyes do their naathral business."

"Bourke—there is some one on the watch, that we don't count among ship's crew. There is some stranger, I tell you, knows more of our tacks than he ought to know. I ask you again, sirrah,—and now have a care of your answer—Is there, or is there not a skulking traitor amongst you?"

"*Dhar-a-loursa*—A thraithor!—What business would such a one have to be rubbin' to us?—Would he see the sun two mornin's afther we found out what he was, I wondher?" And, to intimate his meaning, he slowly took out of his bosom a large, clumsily-shaped pistol, laid it on the table, and scowled at it:—"And let him be ould Nick, or ould Nick's mother, or even Christhin, of any sort, that is lookin' too close at us, I'd have him be on his guard, masther, honey."

"Bourke! had I time to spare for him, he should not, whoever he is, long remain hidden from me, were the earth heaped five fathoms above him. But for the present we must content ourselves with knowing that there *is* some meddling eye fixed on us, and watching our motions; that there *is* some clever hand,—(or at least some hand that

thinks itself clever)—interfering in our affairs; and *that* is quite enough to make me push on the matter we have last been speaking about, with the more speed and spirit. Bourke, I can afford no longer delay. By the time I have mentioned, *that one* must be safely conveyed to the place you know of."

"I'd wager a silver shillin' against a brass farthen," answered Mr. Bourke, "that the boy that 'ud thry to keep her from us might have a chanch of getting his garthers knotted round his throat, instead of above his knee, jolly masther."

"Well, then; be prepared, all of you, ye scoundrels; and mind me; there must be no bungling this time, if you wish to walk about the world with your heads on your shoulders;—do you hear me?"

"I do; and, by this blessed mouth-wather," pursued Bourke, again kissing the lips he adored most—"you may sleep asy on id, I tell you."

"And *I* tell *you*, man, that on this occasion I will not endure disappointment. I did not care a great deal for the loss of that other, whom ye all let slip through your fingers so confoundedly; and, therefore, I half forgave ye, and let ye go unpunished; but, at your peril, let me find neither treachery nor mismanagement in the business now in hand; if I should detect any such thing, it is not merely the loss of my bounty you shall have to dread; but were there a dozen of you, each armed with a pistol, like that before you, loaded

to the muzzle, and the muzzles of all pointed to my breast, every man of you should feel that I was still your master, and able to be quits with you."

"Shadhurth;—I'll dhrink to you on the bargain."

And here, because we do not very much relish their society, we will leave the strange man of the Inch and his worthy associate to arrange their plans; and, with the reader's permission, change the scene.

END OF VOL. I.

THE

MAYOR OF WIND-GAP.

BY

THE O'HARA FAMILY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE

MAYOR OF WIND-GAP.

CHAPTER XII.

ANNY KENNEDY had not the slightest recollection of her father; and of her mother but a very dreamy one remained on her mind. She remembered a weeping, delicate female, taking care of her early childhood, whom she used to call mamma, and her most vivid reminiscences of this individual were mixed up with painful and mysterious feelings. She could relate her efforts to scramble up upon a bed, in which the lady lay, as it had been her wont to do; her agonies at having been held back by a mild, compassionate-looking man, whose kindness of manner, and whose endeavours to sooth her childish grief, partly reconciled her to the opposition she experienced from him. And Anny's memory was farther

strongly impressed with the mode finally adopted to console her: having succeeded in pacifying her a little, the gentleman led her back, repressingly, however, to the bed she had vainly tried to scale, and the person resting in it placed a riband round her neck, to which was attached a shining bauble that pleased her childish eye; nor did Anny, at this day, forget the fervent kiss, and the straining embrace accompanying the gift.

Soon after this, she was led by the mild-looking man to a strange residence, of which the novelty, and, indeed, the splendour delighted her; but she grew tired of the excitement, and cried to be taken back to her mother. This request was not, however, complied with; and she experienced, for some time, much misery; but, at last, she became unconsciously reconciled to the idea of a final separation. Anny yet wore the little present she had received from her dying parent: it was a very small double miniature, having on one side, as she had since been told, the portrait of her father, and, on the other, that of her mother; and she now distinctly understood that the placid man, who had gained such influence over her, at the moment of her infantine tribulation, at the bedside of her dying-mother, was Mr. Connor Kennedy, with whom she had since lived, who had adopted her as his daughter, and to whose considerable property she was to be sole heiress.

What object beneath the blessed sun is more

lovely, more endearing, than that of a little child, bustling about, no matter how imperfectly, as to its success, but still confidently full of a belief of its power to render to middle age its little services, in proof of its great love? If not the truest, is it not the purest, proof of the heart's affection? is it not an evidence, bursting out of the bosom of that child, of the great principle of its creation, and, only let the world not *spoil it*, of its eternally-willed destiny? If love be not the sole, true motive for our genuine attentions to one another, why should that little child so powerfully exemplify the fact that it is? The fairy creature is not yet tutored upon a necessity for pleasing;—it pleases because it is pleased: its little spirit is fresh from the impress, the caress, the embrace, of its God;—its God of love immeasurable!—that is, immeasurable by our mere human feelings of what *we* call love. Answer us, any one who is a parent, what love, at any more advanced period, is equal to the love of that little child?

Oh! it is indeed delightful to behold the innocent eyes, beaming with affectionate earnestness; the other little features sobered into business-like gravity, full of the importance of being occupied for one it loves; and then playing in brilliant joy when the labour of love is applauded by a kiss.

Much of this rather egotistical eulogy of childhood has been called forth by Anny Kennedy, and is, in a great degree, applicable to her. Even

in her earliest days, the patient melancholy of Mr. Kennedy's countenance, its expression of a calm endurance of misfortune, excited Anny's unconscious sympathy, and her young heart felt, unknowingly, a claim preferred upon it for consolation. She would even now call to mind that the chief happiness of those days used to be caused by seeing her guardian's sad features relax into a smile, as the result of her efforts to sooth and please him.

As she grew up, Anny took delight in the performance of little personal services for him. She would be sure to run about the house to find his night-cap, and would arrange it on his head with her own little hands; she would kneel down and fit on his slippers; and, in her opinion, no one but herself could settle the cushions of his arm-chair, or place it in the exact spot he liked, either by the fire in winter, or near the window, overlooking the garden, in summer.

Upon the evening of the day of George Blundell's visit to her, as related in the last chapter, Anny and Mr. Kennedy were, as usual, enjoying each other's society; and they had been for some time discussing the nature of the present new position of her and her lover.

Even on this delicate topic, Anny saw no reason for disguising her thoughts from her guardian. There was something so soft and touching about his manner and character, something so

nearly resembling the gentleness of her own sex, that a confidence of a most unqualified nature had always existed between them. And, to assist in establishing this understanding, never had Mr. Kennedy used a word or a sound of harshness towards Anny; and the idea of being reserved with him could not enter into her thoughts.

From the beginning of her intimacy with George Blundell, her guardian had scarce ever hesitated to question her upon the state of her feelings, nor Anny to express them. The last remarkable interview between the lovers was, therefore, talked over by Kennedy's fire-side, without, as we have before intimated, the slightest reservation, except, we are bound to admit, in one instance.

Anny had given her solemn promise that she would guard the secret of George Blundell's explanation of his intimacy with the disreputable person lately come into their neighbourhood; and was compelled, therefore, to conceal the mystery from her old confidant.

"And yet, Anny, although you will not account to me why it is you are so satisfied of his innocence, yet you will have me go the full length of agreeing with you in your conviction of it."

"Exactly so, my dear sir."

"He has bound you to honourable secrecy?"

"He has, sir: in my mind and heart I rely upon the statements George Blundell has made; and even if he had not wished me to guard his secret, there is that about it connected with my good wishes towards him, which I believe would seem to compel me to be as prudent on the matter, even with you, as you now find me."

"Anny, his wishing you to remain silent is, in itself, a circumstance full of suspicion, in the young man's conduct. If his exculpation will bear scrutiny, why is it to be hidden from every one, except the person most likely to take it upon mere trust?"

"Should I attempt to give you any answer," said Anny, "I must run the risk of, at all events, hinting what I am bound not to breathe a word of."

"Well, Anny, perhaps you can satisfy me upon one single point;—did Mr. Blundell make it appear quite satisfactory to you that he had no intimate connexion with that very doubtful character, called the strange man of the Inch?"

"My dear sir," continued Anny, after a short pause, "I am sure that, without the slightest breach of trust, I may reply to your present interrogatory. Instead of denying an intimate connexion with this man, he openly avowed it to me; yet, upon the nature of that connexion, he rests his chief defence against the charge of participation in the acts in which they are supposed

to be jointly concerned; and here, again, I must add, I am not at liberty to explain farther."

"Very, very strange, indeed," mused Mr. Kennedy.

"I admit it is, sir; yet, if my judgment be not very shallow, I think I thoroughly understand the case: and, indeed, I can confidently say that, to my own mind, George's acquittal is not pronounced by me on a hasty examination, or upon untenable grounds."

"You may feel all this to be very true, Anny, as matters appear to you, and as you feel they ought to be; but, dear child, your heart has not been unemployed in forming your decision; and, I fear, much fear, that the pretending head is more frequently its partisan than its judge, when appealed to, perseveringly, by that courageous little tempter."

"Indeed, sir, and is this the case?"

"Anny, dear Anny, I vouch to you my own experience in proof of my assertion. Alas! too well I know how unnerved the reasoning power becomes, when the heart tampers with its decisions. Oh! how filmed and warped then is the vision of the understanding! how inevitably does it deceive itself! Oh, Anny! it will deck the brow of a barren precipice with flowers, to hinder itself from seeing the gulf below, as well as to entice itself to its edge; and on—on—its dupe will rush exulting in a certainty of his clear-

sightedness, until he reels and falls, for ever, ever falls, in his eagerness to pluck the visionary decoration! Anny, my dear child, I have, as I intimated to you, experienced something like this: forgive me, then, if I impugn your young judgment until I can examine, with my own eyes, the foundation on which it rests."

"Dear sir," resumed Anny, "though, perhaps, not now with as much firmness of manner as she had hitherto displayed, "I can only repeat that, were I at liberty to detail his defence, you would deliver, with me, a verdict of acquittal in favour of George Blundell."

"And, Anny, *I* can only repeat, that, until I know his defence as intimately as you do, I must withhold my verdict. I believe you will not call me an uncharitable man, and yet this is my conclusion."

"My dearest friend," cried Anny, with tears in her eyes, "what living creature can call you that? to me you are charity personified."

"My poor child!" answered Mr. Kennedy, mournfully, "even the fervour of the flattery you now offer me is proof that the affectionate little tenant of your bosom is more than a match for your too complying reason. Ever do you overrate my claims to any thing like good qualities, and you have no eye for the deep and visible blemishes of my character. Listen to me, dear Anny, even yet I am unwillingly bound to say

that I consider this young man as an unfit visiter here."

"I have, myself, told him the same, sir; he is not to visit me at all; nay, communication of every kind is to cease between us, until he shall be able to prove his innocence to the world's full face."

"Thank you, my dear, thank you—" Mr. Kennedy took her hand.

"Or until, sir,"—Anny blushed and hesitated.

"Well, my dear child? or until——"

"That is, sir, unless the world continue to condemn him, without reason, for an unreasonably long period; and, in such a case, sir, and when there is no friend left to him, but myself," —she paused again.

"O my poor Anny! I thought as much—heart, heart alone, child, has been your counsellor. I admire the noble confidence of your nature. I acknowledge the great value of your sentiment, in the abstract; but I fear its present prudence. You will believe me, Anny, I can have nothing but your dear happiness in view; but I will demonstrate to you, Anny, that the heart's promptings alone are not to be taken as guide to the right and the fit: and I will do this by laying before you the example of one who has been their victim, their most miserable victim.—Dear child, in the hope that I may be your warning, I will give you the history of my own

secret griefs, although the recital of them may inflict a first keen wound on your affectionate heart; and although it probe anew those which, for half my life, have been festering in mine."

"Dear, dear sir," pleaded Anny, "I have always forborne to question you on this subject, because, giddy as I am, I could just discriminate enough to perceive that the retrospect would be most distressing to you; and do not now, I entreat you, my friend and my father, cause yourself pain on my account. Whatever your counsel may be, I will follow it merely because you offer it, assured as I am that you will never advise me against my affections, if those affections deserve your sanction."

"My good and sensible child, notwithstanding my long repugnance, evident even to yourself, to enter into the secrets of the dark past, I have lately begun to feel, while thinking it might be necessary for your instruction, that the effort might prove pleasing as well as painful to me. Besides, the making you my confidant, now, in your mature years, appears as a promise of some late consolation to me. Moreover, when friendship lends us an ear, it may, perhaps, be selfish and wrong for ever to hide even our misfortunes; and well I know, dear Anny, that a commiserating friend is to listen to my disclosures,—a true, a commiserating friend."

Anny, her tearful eyes resting upon his, raised his hand to her lips.

"Yes, yes, my child;—no use of words to give me an assurance. Indeed, for some years I have had the intention of confiding my cares to you, and what time for doing so can be fitter than the present, when I see a probability of your suffering from causes resembling those to which I owe my own wretched earthly lot?"

CHAPTER XIII.

"You are not ignorant, my child, of the light in which the world regards me. While you were yet a little girl, I well remember your running home to me one day, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, after your defence of me against the charges of a young companion, and I remember, too, that the moment you saw me, you not only repeated all that had been said, but proclaimed your own generous disbelief of the calumnies; and, on that occasion, Anny, I declared to you that I had been much belied, and now I solemnly repeat the assertion. You know by whom I was rescued from poverty and neglect; and you also know that the world accuses me of the blackest ingratitude and of the most hideous treachery, in return for the obligations heaped upon me by my cousin, Harry Stokesbury. Anny, the world

seldom sees but the surface of things. Motives for actions, it will scarce go to the trouble of calculating; and where there is room for conjecture, condemnation follows, instead of extenuation—no matter—with that hasty and uncharitable world I have had for twenty years no communication. It has judged me as it thought proper, and I have remained silent towards it, and secluded from it, with you, at our little hearth. Its sympathy I could not expect to find; its pleasures had no attraction for me; in a word, I have left it to deal with me as it pleased, and very, very hardly it *has* dealt with me.

"Henry Stokesbury most generously rescued me from early distress; and, indeed, with his patronage, he gave me his affection. Did I only hate him in return? No—my dear child—he had my love for his love; and although in one lamentable instance I accuse my weak nature of having done him wrong—yes—a wrong it was, however unwilled or unintended by me—yet, in all others, I was his true, loving cousin, and grateful friend.

"It is said of me that I fomented the quarrel between my benefactor and his father, for the purpose of grasping my cousin's patrimony. Oh! dear Anny—that is very, very untrue. I declare to you, my child, and it is the first time that I have ever opened my lips in self-exculpation, that whatever human ingenuity could devise, whatever the most ardent friendship could suggest, I tried in order to reconcile the father and son. But all my

efforts were unavailing; the old man died in his rage; and, as evidence of its uncooled force, disinherited his only child—bequeathed his property to me, comparatively a stranger, and, frightful to add, Anny, with almost his last breath, cursed his offspring. But, my child, from the moment I became possessor of that property, nothing was ever farther from my thoughts than to take advantage of the angry bequest, which legally made it mine. The vengeance of my cousin burst on me unawares, before explanation could be offered to him; had this not been the case, he would have learned that every shilling of his own had been treasured up for him; it was, in fact, my intention to have put into his hands an authenticated account, after having burned his father's will in his presence. But he had scarcely heard one sound of my voice, when he left me unable to utter another—nay, he parted from his country before I was sufficiently recovered to speak with him, or even to write to him. For even upon the unhappy public occasion which doomed his expatriation, I could not appear. Thank God, at any rate, for having been saved from such a terrible exhibition of my feelings!

"The world wonders, Anny, why I have lived, and why I do live, so much within my apparent income. But to this hour, never have I applied to my own uses one penny of Harry Stokesbury's fortune; and when I am gone, it will be seen that I have stored up its annual produce, increasing it,

even, by every means; and that the manner of its final appropriation cannot be called unjust: on account of our humble expenditure in this house, dear Anny, I have not, in truth, dispensed more than half of the interest of my wife's fortune. And for all this, you have nothing but my word, Anny; but I am assured that, with you, my word is sufficient warrant of the truth.

"But there is another matter, my child, regarding which, I wish my conscience could bear me out as courageously as it does upon the subject I have just spoken of; and here it is, that, by continuing my story, I hope to instruct your heart, Anny, and to warn it to examine carefully the present state of its inclinations.

"By a clause in old Mr. Stokesbury's will, I was to be his heir, only on the condition of espousing his ward, Mary Bryan. My censurers assert that, when the will became declared, I wedded her, in order to ensure her guardian's property, as well as her own. But such was not the case, and I have more than my assertions to offer, at present, Anny. The registry of this parish, compared with the date of the will, proves that I was Mary Bryan's husband, two months before that will was known to be in existence.

Now, Anny, give me all your attention. As the ward of the elder Stokesbury, poor Mary Bryan lived under the same roof with him, young Harry, and myself. Oh! Anny—if ever an an-

gel's spirit animated a most beauteous human form, it did that of Mary! All mildness, and all gentleness, all goodness and all loveliness, were expressed by her heavenly blue eyes—kind as it was radiant, her smile ever beamed on; so soft and thrilling was her girl's voice, that it came upon your ear with the witching influence of that of the fabled siren's. And this glorious young being was, by her father's dying command, to wive with her cousin, Harry Stokesbury.

"Harry may have loved her, nay, it is impossible but that he must have loved her; but to tell you that I loved her, Anny, would be a foolish endeavour to define, by cold words, the perfect prostration of heart and soul, of mind and existence, with which I bowed me down before her. But, Anny, I do most solemnly and most sincerely asseverate to you, my good, dear child, as well as to the face of my God, who hears me, that, day and night, hour by hour, with incessant effort and effort, I struggled and struggled to repress every, the slightest symptom of the gigantic passion which devoured me! For, first, it appeared to me the wildest presumption to calculate even a remote possibility of winning from such a creature a return of love;—and then came the sense of what an atrocious sin it would be in me to tempt even that impossibility, by the manifestation of a thousandth, thousandth part of what I felt for her. Indeed, indeed, Anny, to this hour, after the most careful, and, God knows, frequent examination of

myself, I am quite sure that, until a certain period to which I must shortly refer, I never gave her cause, by act, word, or look, to suspect my attachment.

"But oh! Anny,—the tortures of that time of self-repression! In the silence of the night, in my bed; in the solitude of nature, at mid-day, I have experienced over and over, the desolating contest of duty with love, of smiting conscience with raging passion! Tears, bitter tears, always proclaimed, however, at what side victory declared herself—and then I have lain, bodily-exhausted, as I was heart-hopeless.

"Some of the temptings of my spirit prompted me to ask myself the question—*Does* Harry indeed love her?"—and I would foolishly, perversely answer—"No—he does not!—Where are the proofs of his affection?—of such an affection as Mary ought to command from all—of such an affection as she commands from me?" And then I would go on, idiot-like, till I had half convinced myself that he cared nothing for his affianced bride. "He at all times accosts her freely," I continued, "and never is embarrassed in her presence; I tremble from head to foot, not daring to raise my eyes to hers, if occasion requires that we converse together—Nay, his conduct towards her is scarcely respectful; I have seen him act similarly to many other women, for whom he professed no particular regard." And thus, Anny,—observe me well—impotently, as well as impatiently, rea-

coming, because I thought only, by the heart—because, in fact, I did not think at all—thus, Anny, in spite of, I will say, virtuous wishes and intentions, at the bottom of my soul, I allowed to continue within me, the whisperings of a delusion which, at last, plunged me into irremediable ruin.

"Never had I dared to exchange with my idol even the few casual words rendered as matter of course by our relative situations, without marking, at the same time, by my manner, the distance due from one in a dependant station, towards a superior person. But whatever might have been my cousin Henry's feelings for Mary Bryan, it was quite evident to me that the young girl herself regarded him, not only with indifference, but aversion. She was not ignorant of his wild habits—(perhaps they might deserve a worse name;)—indeed, he made no great secret of them even to her ears; and she would weep at what I could perceive was her sense of his rudeness; and at other times I have seen her shrink and shudder, when she witnessed the violent altercations which frequently took place between him and his father: for, dear Anny, both unfortunately had very violent tempers; and I fear neither was good Christian enough to curb the impulse of his passions; and very often when, after leading the disputants into another room, and there partially succeeding in reconciling them to each other, I have returned into her presence, I used to find her in utter misery, writhing under the effects of present alarm,

and of anticipation of future wretchedness, at the prospect of becoming the wife of one so totally different from her own dispositions, tastes, and sentiments. Anny, I will not disguise from you—for why should I do so—that it was not always by mere observation of her conduct and manner, that I came to these conclusions; she has distinctly avowed to me, on those occasions, her thoughts and her feelings. Oh! how heavenly dove-like was Mary! and when I would respectfully endeavour to give her a more cheerful view of things, and to hold up to her what I believed to be a bright side of my cousin's character; when I painted it as distinguished for generosity, and noble feeling, notwithstanding all its lapses into thoughtless folly; when I represented him to her in the light I was sure he deserved to be shown in by me; then, Anny, she more than once timidly approached me, and, placing her hand on mine, said, in a tone of voice and with a look absolutely entrancing, "How can you advocate the cause of a man so unlike yourself? Anny, my child, from time to time, such indications of a return of love for the love I bore to her heightened the battle between my sense of duty and the impulse of my weak heart, to something beyond my powers of description.

On the very last occasion upon which my cousin and his father contended together—that dreadful day, when the son, in his heated passion, although tempted by his parent's hand, outraged that parent

beyond extenuation; when he was obliged to fly from the house to avoid the shedding of his blood, by his father, and, indeed, it was myself who by weak struggles with Mr. Stokesbury, succeeded in securing him the time necessary for his escape; upon that day, when I returned to the drawing-room, I found Mary Bryan lying insensible on the carpet. She had been a witness of the terrible scene I have alluded to; had fainted during its enactment; had been overlooked by us all, and now lay before him, not yet recovered from her swoon. Without the necessary reflection on what I was about to do, I impulsively caught her up in my arms; and, while my heart throbbed and my limbs trembled with fearful apprehensions, I used every means at hand to restore her to her senses.

"She opened her beautiful eyes; she glanced round in affright; her look then met mine, and instantly changed into an expression of such bursting confidence, of such melting appeal, that, together with the former fluttering state of my feelings, it deprived me of all presence of mind, all self-control.

"'My adored,' I cried, dashing myself at her feet, as she reclined on a sofa—'my life's queen! my love! my love!' I lay prostrate, and covered my face with my hands, while the sobs choked me. I heard her start, and feebly raise herself, as she whispered—'Connor Kennedy, what have you said to me?—stand up and let me hear you, distinctly.'

"I could not now interpret to my own full satisfaction the tones of her voice; and her words might mean either displeasure, or the contrary; and I therefore answered—

"'Forget my words, Miss Bryan! my presumptuous, my criminal words! put them out of your mind, as if you had never heard them!'

"But Mary spoke again, and not as if she would forget; and I replied; and—but why lengthen out the story of my fate?—oh! Anny, in that moment of deep affliction—in that moment of utter terror of the character and temper of my cousin, and of horror at the prospect of being united to him, Mary Bryan told me that she loved me! that she had loved me as long and as well as I had loved her; that no force on earth should ever compel her to become the wife of Harry Stokesbury; that, to avoid him, she would resign wealth, station, independence—every thing but honour; that she would willingly abandon the fortune he was to receive with her hand; that she had rather—a thousand times rather—live with me in poverty, than with him, or with any man like him, on the world's throne; nay, that she would cheerfully work for her daily bread, for me and for herself, sooner than encounter the detested lot of a life at his side.

"Anny, my child, here was a trial for me!—the heart-tearing contest in my bosom I remember well to this very hour;—here was a happiness I had never even dreamt of offered to my hand! here

was a bliss, beyond all imagination, placed within my reach; how did I act? to my Maker, who hears me, I declare that I did not, as might be supposed, say to Mary that I accepted her love. Nay, I tried all in my power to make her believe that the unwilling words which had so lately escaped my lips were words of folly and of madness, and contained no applicable meaning. I could not, indeed, force myself to assert that I loved her not; conscience itself was not able to make me belie my affections; but, with miserable tears, I sought to point out to her how treacherous would be my conduct, did I dare to avow my passion; I insisted upon the gratitude which I owed to my cousin; I described how base would be my return for all his bounties, where I to rob him of the treasure he had so long regarded as his own; and, when she insisted that Harry Stokesbury loved only her wealth, I endeavoured—feebly, perhaps, because my conviction, I should rather call it my perverted impression, went the contrary way—but I did endeavour to convince her that Henry Stokesbury really loved her for herself, and that she would be happy as his wife. And in fact, Anny, I left her presence, on that occasion, without renewing any declaration of the feelings that preyed on me —that lacerated the heart to which I pressed them for concealment, even as the cloaked animal fed upon the vitals of the Lacedemonian boy.

"Nor did I, upon the morrow, seek occasion to ensure her love; nor upon the next day, nor upon

the next; and for some time, Mary and I met as strangers,—alas! more strangely and embarrassedly than strangers could meet. But, at last, I perceived that the beautiful idol of my adoration began to droop; that her cheek was fading; her eye narrowing, and losing its lustre; and that her whole air and manner were weighed down. And then, Anny, how often, oh! how often, did I detect myself in the impulse, almost in the act, of casting myself before her, and proclaiming, with ecstasy, the love which I nurtured for her! But still, and still, I could hold myself back by the withering recollection that, by so doing, I should stamp and seal to all eternity my own character, as an ingrate and a traitor. Oh! that this stern sense of duty had never quitted me! Oh! that it had ever, ever stood erect at my side, like a mail-clad and frowning sentinel, watching over my moments of human weakness! Above all things, O that my insidious thought of my cousin's indifference to Mary had never taken possession,—tempting, fiendish possession, of my breast,—my harassed and my frail heart! My child, let my fate, I say it again, be your warning.

"Anny, I fell at last. She heard from me renewed expressions of my love for her; and, with my arms around her, we knelt and vowed, in the face of Heaven, a mutual vow. And then, for a short time, every thing was forgotten by me. In the intoxicating consciousness of interchanged affection, between Mary Bryan and me, all possible

consequences, all possible remorse, vanished from my view. But even the roaring drunkard, in the midst of his orgies, will sometimes feel, shot through him, an icy and sickening conviction of the crime, as well as the hollowness of his self-forgetting and unnatural joys; and I, Anny, I, before we entwined each other's arms that day, I was a most miserable human being; and I started away from my paradise of enjoyment, to seek the deepest solitude, like the ambitious, fallen angel, hurled at once from heaven into hell. I well remember the place, out of doors, into which, after running fast from the house, I plunged myself. It was a thick, though small, clump of trees, surrounded by a paling in the paddock; no space for reclining, or even for motion, had been prepared within it; yet into it I tumbled, I may say; and there, scratched and stung by the thorns and nettles, its sole obscure brush-wood, I lay, so far as regarded my bodily sufferings, as if I had reclined upon a couch of regal down. But oh! the bed for the mind and the heart! there was none—there was none. My very ears throbbed; and throbbed to the echo of the in-felt accusation of traitor! traitor!—the black sin against the charge of which universal human nature is said to rise up in arms! —that sin,—the sin of ingratitude, the certain presence of it, rose up and wound within me like the coils of a hideous serpent! I had betrayed my benefactor; the benefactor of my earliest years!—the man, the relation, and the friend who had

saved me from absolute squalidness!—who had put shoes on my bare feet in childhood!—who had given me education, or, at least, some of the opportunities for acquiring it!—who, at least, had taken my mind out of that quagmire state of inferiority in which it might have been self-neglected, or else trampled down!—who, along with all that had afforded me abundant means of superfluously luxurious enjoyment;—and who, far above all, all that, had—Oh! I was very sure of it!—conferred upon me his heart's affection.—Oh! Anny, my child, my child! I could do nothing but hide my face, even I may say, from myself, and cry,—cry, Anny.

"Oh Anny! there is no real misfortune, but the conscience that accuses of crime!—A man may be plunged to the chin in apparent wretchedness!—poverty, sickness, long and racking pains may assail him; torturing pains, which seem to wrench his bones out of their joints, and to tear each little fibre of his nervously constructed body into tatters; and, worse than this, even worldly neglect,—even the avoiding of you by one of your species, who imagines he has a cause of anger, or of superiority over you;—all this, Anny, is nothing, nothing compared with one pang of an unquiet conscience!

"I still lay prone in my solitude, when I heard voices around me calling out my name. I appeared to one of those who sought me; he introduced me to another man, a messenger from my

cousin, Harry Stokesbury. I stood before that obscure person, weighed down with a sense of shame and degradation. With almost a felon's trepidation, and, I suppose, with almost a felon's look, I received at his hands a letter from his employer.

"Henry had now been absent from his home more than three months. During that time, his own man, the individual who at present confronted me, had been a confidential agent between us. We had, therefore, kept up a constant correspondence. His demands for money were incessant, yet I found means to supply them. His father had bestowed considerable sums on me, for the purpose of proving, as he gave me to understand, that his refusal of the constant demands of his son did not arise from a parsimonious disposition, but rather because he would not encourage Harry's spendthrift habits. Anny, every shilling thus received by me was transmitted through his favourite servant to my cousin. When such sources failed, I borrowed for him, wherever I could obtain credit; and I even requested and took loans from the gentle Mary, who never refused my applications, because I imagined I was only anticipating a resource which would ultimately become my cousin's undisputed right.

"The note which the confidential messenger now put into my hands contained only a few words, merely intimating that Harry was upon the point of setting off for a very distant residence; that urgent necessity compelled his immediate departure; and

that the bearer would verbally convey to me a request which he required me to fulfil, if I cared for him or loved him.

"I demanded of the man the nature of the service I was to perform; and learned, in the first place, that a sum of money, of which the amount surprised me, was necessary; but, Anny, how shall I express to you the effect produced on me by the communication of the second portion of the courier's intelligence! In the strictest confidence, on the part of Harry Stokesbury, I was informed that my cousin had been recently married, and the name of his bride was supplied to me. For some time before, I had been aware that Harry had occasionally visited the young person in question; and, to my mind, there was, therefore, probability in the servent's statement. Probability to my mind, I say, Anny; but, mark me still,—to my weak and credulous heart there was what there ought not to have been,—certainty!—Yes, my child; and even when my reason proposed a close and cautious investigation of the subject, that deceitful heart, panting with selfish exultation, turned me aside from my purpose. Oh Anny! I wanted to be deceived! that was the real truth. I wanted to believe myself made free, by Harry Stokesbury's own renunciation of her, to espouse Mary Bryan, and the most loose evidence of such an act, therefore, satisfied me. And when thus relieved from the tortures of conscience, which, but a few moments before, had been fastened upon me like gnawing

reptiles, can you not imagine, Anny, the wild turbulence of joy which I, at length, experienced!

"The sum of money required of me, very considerable as it was, I soon made up; with it in his possession, the man went away; and next day I became, in secret, Mary Bryan's husband.

"For more than nine months afterwards I did not hear of or from my cousin. He had not intimated to me the place of his intended new residence, and I could not, therefore, expect that a letter from me would directly reach him; and although I did frequently write to the not remote retreat he had chosen, when first expelled from home by his father's violence, no answer ever came to my hand. But we met again, and that meeting was terrific.

"Two months after my marriage with his ward, old Mr. Stokesbury died; and died too, ignorant of that circumstance, although his last will proved that he had wished it. In vain did I assail, with entreaties and prayers, his death-bed, in order to prevail upon him to forgive his erring son, and call him home to receive a last blessing.

"Mary and I lived on together, under the roof which had now become Harry Stokesbury's, the two happiest of God's creatures. I longed for the presence of my generous cousin to witness, and I was sure, to enjoy, our bliss; but he came not; and still I had no tidings of him, directly or indirectly. My wife made me the father of a glorious boy. Unable, herself to nurture her baby, it was

given in charge to a young married woman, residing in the neighbourhood. She was yet confined to her bed, slowly regaining her strength; the infant's nurse suddenly burst, in distraction, into her chamber, and told the mother that her first-born child had been torn away from her arms; and that, with curses and with threats of destruction towards it on his lips, Henry Stokesbury was the ravisher.

"This fearful and abrupt announcement threw my poor Mary into a dangerous fever. My fears and agonies for her were intense. And so, too, were my misgivings, on another account. Then first did I begin to doubt my former belief that Harry was indifferent to Mary Bryan; then did I tremble at the thought that the last message I had received from him might have been a fabrication!

"I was not long left in uncertainty. The terrified young nurse had made her appearance towards night-fall. That same night I heard the house tumultuously broken into. My wife had fallen into a fitful slumber. I was sitting at her bed-side. The door was kicked open; Harry Stokesbury, with all the rage of a maniac in his look and manner, dashed into the room. Suddenly, feeling certain of the supposed grounds for his coming violence, in vain did I start up to offer him an explanation; in vain did I implore him to listen to me, but for an instant. He beat me down with his powerful hand; with his foot he crushed me and trampled upon me, till I lay almost insen-

sible. Loud and long shrieks from my wife partly recalled my fluttering mind. Ghastly and bleeding as I was, I staggered up and cast myself upon the bed. In an instant she was dead in my arms.

"Consciousness now quite forsook me; and, indeed, as I have been informed, did not, during a long, long period, revisit me. In fact, my child, and do not let me startle you by the avowal—for many blank and dreary years, I was a melancholy madman."

But poor Anny did start and shudder, too. Her guardian continued:—

"When, after the long night of forgetfulness, reason's blessed rays again dawned upon me, I learned that Harry Stokesbury had been prosecuted and convicted for the commission of the acts I have described to you. Oh, Anny! had I been, at that time, a conscious creature, never should he have been questioned on the matter!—sooner would I have seen my adored wife die again—sooner, sooner should my own heart's blood have flowed, than that Harry Stokesbury should have stood before the world as a culprit! I would have acknowledged the justice of his vengeance. I would have cast my wretched life, a thousand times, were it possible, between him and public disgrace!

"Yes, Anny; and I would have given up to him his right—his inheritance; I would have resigned to him even my Mary's dower—oh, I would have

endeavoured in any way to prove to him that I was not the very, very ungrateful wretch he supposed me to be; and then I would have hidden my ill-starred head from the world, and lived—if that were practicable, upon my recollections. Oh! Anny, Anny, I learned that my loving, and my beloved cousin, had been convicted as a felon, on my account, and banished from his country—and then, that he had found a grave under the roaring sea; and I regarded myself, from first to last, as his destroyer!

"It was only very lately that I discovered the fatal error, to which I must immediately attribute my misery. You know Kynan Donnelly, Anny. A short time ago I employed him as a helper about this house—he had been the bearer of my cousin's last note to me. He it was who had feigned that damning message, from Harry Stokesbury, which informed me that he was married. Some months since, Kynan appeared before me very penitent; acknowledged his former crime, and seemed to me so truly contrite, as the unintentional author of my misfortunes, that I took him into my service—particularly as I understood that he was in great distress; and most particularly, because, notwithstanding any former wrong against myself, I knew him to have been in early days the favoured servant of the ill-fated Harry Stokesbury.

Donnelly's motive for his conduct, upon the miserable occasion of all our sorrows, seemed to me

to be high-minded, and I could not blame him. He really did suppose that his master was the husband of the young person whom he had mentioned to me; he had not been unaware of the state of Mary Bryan's feelings; and, under the impression that he was doing a service to both parties, he gave to me, as direct information from his master, what was but the result of his own invention. I forgave him, too, on another account. I recollected that I should not have received his fatal message without rigorous examination, and I said to myself, that since I *had* taken it on trust from my treacherous heart, I was much more guilty than the bearer of it. Well—no matter—I have forgiven poor Donnelly—resentment, now, is not in the slightest degree a quality of my nature. Indeed, it is quite dead within me; and for nothing that has happened to me, do I reproach any body but myself.

"Anny—you have heard the history of my life. You now understand why, since you have known me, from childhood up to womanhood, I have hidden my head from the world. That world bestows upon me many hard names; well, perhaps it punishes me only as I deserve. At all events, I have bidden adieu to it without a murmur, and still in charity with it; because, though not as guilty as it would make me, still I know that I am very guilty.

"And you will now also understand, my dear Anny, why you have never seen the cloud of sor-

row pass from my brow. You will now understand why I have so seldom smiled upon the sports of your childhood, the witcheries of your girlhood, and I may say the graces of your womanhood."

"Dear, dear friend," said Anny, weeping, and again kissing his hand, "I do not recollect that I have ever, ever yet, wanted the encouragement, or the cheerfulness, or the sympathy of your beloved and respected smile."

"Well, Anny—I have only to thank you over and over again for that generous assertion. But, I must continue to say, that you will now understand why I have scarce ever seemed cheerful in my own house; why even my own servants look upon me with coldness, with affright, perhaps; certainly with want of interest, and sometimes with rudeness; why I am not able to assert myself sternly and openly as a man ought to do, even upon the slightest occasion of annoyance. In fact, you will understand why I am the nervous, the shivering, the almost unmanly creature you know me to be;—why a loud word makes me start;—why the appearance of violence makes me recoil;—and I wish particularly to say, why this day, this very day I avoided the presence of our friend, Mr. George Blundell, when I saw, or when I thought I saw, his passion boiling for vent, against any opposing obstacle.

"Anny, it is not courageous to admit what I am about to add—but I have never boldly raised up

my head since I was left trampled down, and disfigured in my own blood, at the bed-side of my departed Mary. Before that, I had had strong moral courage, and, without boasting, I could prove the assertion; although I never was a strongly built man: and certainly never a brawling one; and it may be, that all I have suffered has weakened the nerves of my body—so as to give me the semblance of almost a trembling girl —when I see the least threat of approaching turbulence.

"Anny, you have early given away the affections of your young and generous heart. Mine is a history of the heart. Oh! profit by my example, dear child. Under your present circumstances, let not the mere impulse of your bosom determine you in the way you have to go. Do not act because you want to act. Listen to the whisperings of affection, to their blandishments, and their sophistry, with suspicion, nay, with alarm. In a word, keep my fate before your mind, and then I shall not have told my sad tale in vain."

We have followed Mr. Kennedy's narrative without interruption, because it seemed unnecessary to break it up by mentioning the agitated and frequent pauses he made in his discourse; or by describing the effects it produced, from time to time upon his fair auditor. And now it is sufficient to say that, at its close, the gentle Anny

felt most strongly for the sufferings of her guardian, exerting all her powers to bind up and revivify his bruised spirit; and that, before they separated for the night, Mr. Kennedy, while impressing upon her cheek a parting kiss, acknowledged, in an affectionate whisper, how much more endurable he now felt, in consequence of her sympathy, the pressure of his griefs.

The same night, at a late hour, Anny and her attendant were seated in the sleep-chamber of the former. They had been engaged in very earnest conversation, and had not, therefore, noticed how the time flew. The other members of the household had long before retired to rest, and all was dully silent around them;

> The slumbering pulse of night stood still;

and but for the low whisperings of Grace Carroll's voice, the fairy flutter of the moth's wing, as it whirled round the candle, might almost have been heard.

It was the nature of her theme, as well, per-

haps, as the solemn midnight hour, and the awfully congenial silence, which subdued, to a murmuring cadence, Grace's usually vigorous tones. She had been descanting, at great length, on the supernatural endowments of the strange man of the Inch. She had been telling of his foul nightly revels, amid blazing lights, shouts of laughter, and sometimes, very strange to say, shrieks of seeming agony, with the devil and his imps: and of the spells which he cast on ill-starred females; and Grace stated, as a well-received opinion, nay, as an uncontrollable truth, that an impress stamped by the enemy of man, disfigured that side of his face which he so carefully kept concealed, and she was most eloquent on the nature of the unholy fire which burned in his uncovered eye.

Had Anny been influenced by a preoccupation of mind on the present subject, she might have smiled at all this improbable exaggeration; but she could not forget her own disagreeable encounter with the strange man, nor the painful warnings of the Mayor of Wind-gap; besides, this individual, so universally dreaded and detested, was the father of George Blundell. She listened, therefore, attentively, and all but assentingly, to every thing Grace Carroll was saying, or could say; bending down towards the girl, who sat on a footstool, some distance from her, in the attitude of one who is distressingly interested.

Suddenly she laid her hand upon the shoulder of her humble companion, and,—"Stop, Grace," she said, "do you not hear a foot on the stairs?"

Unable to utter a word, Grace gazed at her in gaping terror.

"There certainly is some one creeping up the stairs," continued Anny, turning deadly pale, "and my door remains unbolted, I believe."

With the speed of great fear, agitated and trembling as she was, Anny tripped towards the door; but she had not reached it, when the handle of its lock turned; it swung wide open; and, before she could effectually cry out for assistance, she was seized, and her voice stifled. Four men, carefully, though ridiculously, disguised, had entered the room, at once; and Grace Carroll, simultaneously with the measures adopted towards her mistress, was bound hand and foot, and also well gagged.

"One word louder than your breath," said a growling voice in the girl's ear, "and I'll slit your wind-pipe, as nate as ever the little cook in the kitchen done it for the turkey."

They rummaged the apartment for articles of outside dress; and as many as they could find were hastily forced upon Anny's person, by the rough hands of her not gentle attendants. This done, she was borne away with well arranged silence and celerity. Through the open hall-door of the house, they conveyed her into the street; then rapidly to the nearest suburb; there they

placed her on one of those small "cars," used by the peasantry of Ireland; and, two of her captors holding her securely in it, drove it with the utmost speed of which such a machine is capable.

CHAPTER XIV.

The dreadful voice in her ear, threatening her with destruction if she did not remain quiet, nearly deprived Grace Carroll of her senses. Implicit obedience to its command she was, however, able to determine upon; and she, therefore, continued for a considerable lapse of time, lying upon the floor, where, with her mouth tightly muffled, her elbows pinioned, and her ankles and knees well tied up, she had been flung by her rude assaulters. As still as if she were in her coffin, indeed, Grace lay; and, mentally overwhelmed beneath the hugeness of her terror, her mistress was absolutely carried out of the chamber without the poor girl's knowledge of the fact. Selfishness altogether monopolized her feelings.

At length, however, her consternation began slightly to decrease. She became sensible that a dead silence reigned around her; and then arose a recollection of Anny; and the thought, having once

gained admission into her mind, was too engrossing to be dismissed. She ventured to move her head from one side to another, and thus enabled herself to take a piecemeal survey of the room; a candle, prematurely wasted away to the socket by an enormous thief, flickered on the chimney, affording, however, sufficient light for Grace's purposes. Her mistress was no where to be seen.—Her mistress was gone!—was forced away from her!—And all Grace Carroll's merely selfish terrors vanished.—After many efforts, and after repeatedly rolling about the floor, like a fettered calf, she succeeded in gaining a sitting posture; then she ingeniously unloosed the bandage from her mouth; and, finally, her cries and yells resounded through the house.

In a few minutes, all the inmates of the establishment, with one exception, were before her. They unbound Grace; but, for some time, she could assert nothing but that her young mistress was in the hands of that terror of maidens, and walking challenge to all true knights, the strange man of the Inch. How did she know that? She was sure of it. How was she sure of it? Because she was.—And no farther could Grace go.

The nervous, if not hypochondriacal, Mr. Kennedy, was scarce able to do more than tremble and lament with the females of his household; and the task of eliciting from the half-crazed Grace Carroll something like an intelligible account of the misfortune she so clamorously proclaimed, devolved

upon Joseph Fitzgerald, his aged and demure butler.

In anwer to the questions of this individual, she still positively asserted that the strange man of the Inch, in his proper person, had entered the apartment, leading on twelve men, at least, all, as well as himself, with visages on their faces.

Joseph Fitzgerald interrupted her to ask how, if the strange man had worn a vizor, could she be so very sure of his features?

"How? was it how that happened, they were for asking her? Sure, if a body would know him before that night, with the visage on that he always wore over more than a half of his face, wasn't it the aisiest thing in life to know him, every bit as well, when he only dhrew it over the other half? More be token, what other livin' tory, on the face of the earth, *could* snap up her young misthress from her?"

Now, Joseph Fitzgerald had certain misgivings that another person might prove, notwithstanding all this reasoning, to be Anny's abductor; and he felt great relief in consequence; for, if he were right, Anny's lot was not so hopeless a one as that insisted upon for her, by her distracted attendant.

He had understood that young George Blundell was a rejected lover. Upon the evening when Anny had refused to grant him an interview, he had seen him rush out of the house; and was shocked and alarmed at the black expression of the young man's countenance, believing it, at the

time, to indicate an innate character, capable of any act of desperation. Upon his departure from Anny, after the last recorded conversation between them, honest Joseph had also encountered George; and though his brow did not wear a continued fierceness of threat, still, it was far from being as calm as, for general peace-sake, it ought to have been:—and he had not since been near the house, nor sent a message, nor a letter,—and that looked bad. Besides, it was more natural and probable that he should be the offender, in this present instance, than a man who, tainted as his public character might be, had not, to Joseph's knowledge, ever beheld his young lady. Under all the circumstances, the butler's suspicions fastened on George Blundell; and if he could make out and prove his case, no great calamity had occurred, after all. Miss Anny had only been run away with by a man whom she loved dearly, in her heart, whatever lovers' nonsense had set them quarrelling of late; and, no doubt, the boy would marry her, and then every thing would go right, again!

With this end in view, Joseph Fitzgerald cross-questioned Grace Carroll, hoping to shake her testimony, as to the undoubtable presence of the strange man, on the late occasion. But, upon this point, Grace was invulnerable; nay, she now began to add, to her former assertions, that it was the strange man, himself, who had carried Anny down stairs, in his arms, all the time that she, the

witness, saw him as plain in the back, "as ever she saw a pot of potatoes film on the fire." (It is evident that either Grace is, or that we are, the utterer, or the utterers, of a bouncing imagination.)

Joseph changed his ground of attack. Had she any knowledge of the faces, or persons, of any other man of the party?

"Musha, no; the fright was too big, in her eyes, to let her mind any one but the strange man, and her poor young misthress."

"Was she positively sure that young Mr. Blundell had not been in the room?"

Grace, with a sudden catching of breath, dropped her jaw, rolled her eyes, and remained cogitatively silent: she had heard nothing of George Blundell's explanation with Anny, but she *had* seen him, upon more than one occasion, in company with the strange man of the Inch. Juff Carroll insisted, and Grace firmly believed, that he had assisted the strange man in forcing away her cousin Peggy; and, no doubt, as all the world said, they were associates in every crime. And, having rapidly called all this to mind, how Grace did begin to wonder at herself, aloud, for not having before recollected all that she really and truly had seen! In fact, a new and convincing light broke upon her as she added, "Och, vourneens! I'm a fool of the world, for, now that the senses are coming back to me, I'm as good as book-sure that it *was* Mr. George Blundell, his

own self, that whispered them wicked words about the turkey into my ear! Wouldn't I know his voice from a thousand, as good rights I have?"

But proofs for his purpose, better than those which Grace had given, awaited the sagacious Joseph. Bellowings of a human voice were, at this instant, heard distinctly, though remotely, in the lower, and more remote parts of the premises.

It has been mentioned that, when Grace loudly invoked the attention of the household, only one individual of it had failed to attend her summons. This was a man who slept on the kitchen suite of the establishment. He was the same who has been mentioned by Mr. Kennedy in his narrative to Anny; the bearer, in fact, some twenty years before the time of the present scene of our tale, of the unauthenticated message from his then master, young Henry Stokesbury, to Connor Kennedy, which directly caused all the dreadful events that followed the marriage of Harry's protegé with Mary Bryan. We need not remind the reader that, from motives of Christian charity, upon the acknowledgment of his error; from pity for his destitute situation, as well as from a wish to be a friend to any one, even the humblest person who had been connected with his cousin, Mr. Kennedy, at least, according to his own statement, had, some short time ago, taken Patrick Donnelly into his employment, and Joseph Fitzgerald decided that it was the voice of Patrick Donnelly, which now attracted general attention; and he was right.

He descended with others, and found Patrick bound to his bedstead; a piece of wood and a strip of his bed-clothes lying near to him, which, he said, he had just been enabled to force out of his mouth. He was set at liberty, and interrogated, and his answers greatly raised the hopes of Joseph Fitzgerald. Patrick Donnelly had retired to rest early. He had been awakened from his sleep by a consciousness of personal violence. Before he could defend himself he had been so effectually manacled and gagged, like poor Grace, above stairs, that he became incapable of giving any resistance, or even of alarming the house. But, during his short and vain struggle with his captors, a black vizor had fallen from one of their faces, and, by the light of a lantern, held by another, he distinctly recognised George Blundell; as to the strange man of the Inch, he could only speak by surmise; the lantern had not happened to have flashed upon the features of any other person of the party, except those of George Blundell; but he had heard of the strange man of the Inch, as every body had; and, according to the different descriptions conveyed to him, from one source or another, it might be, that one individual, answering in height, in manner, and in general expression, to that formidable fright, seemed to have had command over the rest. But still, Patrick would not swear to this as distinctly as he could to the identical presence of George Blundell.

Joseph Fitzgerald very naturally made light of the presumptive case against the strange man, even upon the joint showing of Grace and Patrick, and became assured, on the contrary, from their corroborative evidence, that George Blundell was still the object of his legal pursuit.

The two trusty servants, Joseph and Patrick, proceeded to ascertain, as a preliminary step to justice, in what manner entrance had been effected. In the rear of Mr. Kennedy's house was an extensive yard, surrounded by high walls. A door opened into it from a lane, passing by one of those walls. It appeared evident that that wall had been scaled; that some one had descended into the yard, and forced back the lock of the door, and removed its heavy wooden cross bolt. The lock of the door, leading from the yard to the kitchen of the house, had been cut away by a hand saw, as the observers were enabled immediately to decide, and from the outside, too. It was also evident that the burglars must have known that Donnelly slept in the first quarter of the residence entered by them; and that, therefore, he had first been overpowered, secured, and silenced, in order to save them interruption in their progress to the upper regions of the house. We have been minute in the detail of these circumstances for the purpose of making the reader understand, in every way, how suspicion fastened upon George Blundell.

It is necessary, also, to take into consideration that, reckoning from the moment of Grace Carroll's

selfish lethargy, and allowing for the time consumed in prevailing upon her to account for her cries, and her position, as also for that wasted in the investigation we have just recorded, more than four hours had now elapsed, since Miss Kennedy's abduction, before any vigorous steps were even resolved upon, for bringing her home again.

"Now, however, the first proceeding decided upon by Joseph Fitzgerald was that of seeking out, and securing, Mr. George Blundell. For this, a legal warrant to arrest his person, as soon as possible, became necessary. It was indispensable for Mr. Kennedy to give his name and his countenance to the measure; and, though with much nervousness and trepidation, he yielded to Joseph's hint.

The house in which George Blundell lodged was, as may be recollected, almost exactly opposite to Mr. Kennedy's; and at the moment that Mr. Kennedy and his party had passed their own threshold, a tall figure, muffled in a loose outside coat, was in the act of opening, with a latch-key, the confronting door. All paused, to observe this person's motions. His key having performed its convenient office, he cautiously half pushed back the door, and having stolen into the passage, secured it after him.

It was determined that, until the ends of justice should be attained, this person ought to be watched. —Patrick Donnelly volunteered to stand as sentinel on the house, promising that, if he should attempt to reissue into the street, he would secure

him at any risk. This suggestion was adopted; and, leaving Patrick upon his post, Joseph Fitzgerald, accompanied, we may say, by Mr. Kennedy, and other subalterns, proceeded to take legal measures for arresting George Blundell.

They bent their steps to the residence of the Mayor of the city. They knocked loud and long at his shop-door, the only one which gave entrance to his house; their summons was not speedily answered, as his worship and his only maid-servant were sound sleepers. When he did appear behind the bench of justice,—his counter—it first became indispensable he should try, by rubbing and scooping into his eye-sockets, with his fat knuckles, to divert his still somniferous inclinations. Before this process, words had been addressed to his ears, but he really heard them not.

When partially awakened, the Mayor listened very patiently, and, if one might judge by the staring of his large, globular, gray eyes, very attentively, also, to Joseph Fitzgerald's statement. But whether it arose from some incontinuous circuitude in the structure of his ear, or from some knot or twist of the optic nerve,—(the cellular membrane is left quite out of the question—his worship failed to catch the subject submitted to him. He appeared, indeed, sadly puzzled how to act. Seeming to ponder and analyze, he took off his red night-cap, and with it rubbed his bald pate, as if by a scientific process, he would elicit, with its friction against the polished globe, some sparks

of "wisdom and discretion." But the machine would not work. He then turned an imploring look on Mr. Kennedy; but that gentleman's silent tears still more chilled his powers of mechanical comprehension, as atmospheric-damp neutralizes the real electric apparatus. His glance next slowly sought the face of Joseph Fitzgerald; inquietude, impatience, and even repulsion, were expressed thereon. In fact, finding no conductor to the surface of his cranium, he heaved a long, long sigh, and exclaimed—"Oh! my gracious!—I wish that Roger was here!"

Roger was accordingly sent for; and in a reasonable time made his appearance. The arrangement of his attire bespoke a hasty toilette. The long queue of his wig dangled over one shoulder;—the back peak of his cocked-hat was before; he held his great sword in one hand, and his huge cudgel in the other; the knees of his small-clothes were unbuttoned; and his unstockinged splay-feet, supporting his lean, hairy, spindle shanks, had been hastily thrust into untied brogues.

His worship passed to Roger his own general recollections of what had been stated to him; but, in fact, he did no more than if he had handed to his officer, from off the shelf at his back, for the purpose of setting it right, one of his own tangled skeins of half-penny play thread. Joseph Fitzgerald was obliged to repeat, for the ears of the pompous Roger Divey, a story which he had previously made plain enough.

The result was that, with great alacrity on the part of Roger, a warrant for the apprehension of George Blundell became quickly and duly perfected; and, courageously buckling on his rapier, Roger, aided by two inferior officers, and followed by Joseph Fitzgerald, proceeded to execute it.

Donnelly was found faithfully on his post.—Roger had now no necessity to inflict upon the lion-faced knocker, the outrage that, upon a former occasion, he had thought himself bound to do. The servant girl was in the act of undoing the shutters of the lower windows; she had previously left open the hall-door. Without a word, Roger, attended by his followers, gained an entrance. Somehow or other, he had before now become acquainted with the statistics of the premises; and he and his little band proceeded, therefore, up stairs, and without ceremony burst into George Blundell's sleeping chamber.

At the noise they made, the young man started up, sat upon the side of his bed, and gazed upon his intruders. He was almost dressed; evidently he had been asleep in his clothes, of which some portions were soiled with mire. Roger Divey quickly pointed out these ominous appearances; as also a loose outside coat, a slouched hat, and a mask, which lay tossed on a chair.

It would seem that George Blundell's first impulse had been to rush forward and question the rude disturbers of his slumbers; but it was now apparent that as soon as he recognised the officers

of justice, he recoiled and sat still, as if checked by some embarrassing fear.—"Oh! my God!" they heard him ejaculate, although in a low tone, "what can this mean, so soon?"

"Misther Blundell, I beg it of you, in honour of the Lord," began Joseph Fitzgerald, anxiously pressing forward.

"I say, you man, you, d'ye see me," interrupted Roger Divey, authoritatively pushing him back; "keep yourself to yourself; and let there be none to the fore but party and party—as ye shall all answer the conthrary, at your peril—;" and Roger, domineeringly, cleared the room of every one but himself and its proprietor, and secured the door as carefully as he could.

"Isn't this a purty kittle o' fish, my young masther?" he resumed, facing round to George Blundell, assuming his fullest air of dignity—"soh!—the game was not fine enough for you, at Juff Carroll's, d'ye see me?"

"What is your charge, now, my good fellow?" questioned George Blundell.

"What's the charge, now?—By vartue o' the good oath I have taken, 'tisn't undher every stone you may kick up, that you'll find the body able to bring you clane out of it. Bud there is one honest man to make the venthre for you, howsomever; an', someway or somehow, we—we know where we stand, when we are on our legs, God bless 'em."

"I have little doubt of your talents, in any case," said George, "but I only wish to hear you state, at once, your present accusation against me."

Roger sunk his official voice into an approach to social condescension, and, taking a chair, half-smiled, and bent himself forward, as he continued:—

"The week that's gone by, d'ye see me, a rale tory, d'ye see me, thro' an' thro', came afore his worship an' myself—long may his worship reign!—an' the name he had on him was *Shawn-a-fausthа;*—an' he was brought to us by a man o' the Dunns; and that man wanted to make it as clear as a whistle that Shawn had a way of ating mutton that never hard the noise o' the butcher-knife, rubbing to his steel; an' he thried to down-face the Mayor an' myself, d'ye see me, that the sheep he found, 'wid the skhin on id, undher my poor Shawn's roof, was a sheep of his own, by rason that it had his mark tarred on id. Bud, Shawn spoke wid one Roger Divey; an' sure it turned out, in the long run, that poor *Shawn-a-fausthа* was a born-nathril,* without the wit to stale a *thraneen* out of a field, not to talk of a clever, active sheep, that 'ud be runnin' about the field, on his fawr legs;—an', anyhow, no one that hard Shawn spakin' could think he ever had an ounce o' sinse in his head; an' so, d'ye see me, Masther

* Simpleton.

Blundell, we proved that the sheep, into the bargain, was a poor fool of a sheep, just like Shawn; and that she wouldn't stay in Dunn's fields, but made her way out of it, not knowin' where she was goin', or what she was doin'; an' ran into Shawn's cabin, an' happened to fall upon the bill-hook, an' kilt herself."

During this wily appeal for a heavy retaining fee, George Blundell's thoughts had lapsed into a train of agonized reflection, so that not an echo of Roger's voice intelligibly reached his ear. It was only when the man stopped speaking that he awoke to a sense of the necessity of again addressing him.

"But you have not yet told me the nature of the charge brought against me."

"By vartue o' the oath, d'ye see me, it was asy enough to put off Juff Carroll at a nonplush; but, it give work to a raal counshellor to make the right appear against Connor Kennedy; he is a knowin' ould pet-fox."

"Connor Kennedy? what of him?" demanded George Blundell.

"Why, barrin' there's one to make the right appear against him, it wouldn't be pleasant to kiss the book on the wrong side; and to prove that there was no burglary at his dour, an' no takin', forcin', an' carryin' away, *why at arums*, a body that goes by the name of his daughther, Misthress Anny Kennedy, spinsther, d'ye see me?"

George Blundell started up, and——

"Heaven and earth, have I understood you?" he said: "do you assert that Miss Kennedy has been forced from her father's house?"

Roger laughed quietly, incredulously, and peace-makingly, as upon former occasions he had been in the habit of doing, at the first vain attempt to disavow guilt, on the part of undoubted offenders, against the law.

"I say, my young Masther, d'ye see me, is it an *omadhaun** is in my coat?"

"Answer my question! resumed George Blundell, in a loud overbearing voice.

"Whoo!—pallaloo! sure he wants to frighten us now, entirely, like others I have known before him in the same purty condition!" said Roger, sneeringly; "and so, my young genteel, you purtend not to know that Miss Anny Kennedy was forced, and taken and carried away, long afore day-break this morning? and may be you won't look at that?" drawing a paper out of his bosom, "and may be you wouldn't see, into the bargain, that it's a warrant, made out by his worship and myself, to make a caption o' you, your own self—for the same?"

George Blundell snatched up the paper; read it frowningly; groaned aloud; flung himself into his bed, and muttered "All is right—proceed in your business."

* Fool.

"Maning to say that you're ready to go before his worship?" demanded Roger.

"Yes, meaning to say exactly that."

"And who's to plade for you, my young squire? where is the fee to bring you out o' your throuble?"

"Do your duty, and curse you! I have no money to give you," answered George.

Roger immediately summoned his assistants; they were quickly by his side. At first, the captured man did not seem to heed any thing around him. After a pause, however, he was heard to say, in a low voice, "Father, father!" and then suddenly changed into high passion—"but no—after all your promises, you are not a father to me! Oh Anny, Anny! all this is too horrible! When, or how can I rejoin you, now? Oh—thus—thus it is easy!"—he sprang towards the door, seemingly unconscious of any one's presence; but he found himself interrupted.

"Give way there, at your peril!" he cried aloud.

Roger technically touched him on the shoulder, and arrested him as the king's prisoner—and Roger's myrmidons closed round him; and when he offered violence, overpowered and secured him. In fact, George Blundell behaved too furiously; the swords of the town bailiffs were drawn; and bleeding from many, though slight wounds, he was eventually led away captive.

The rumour of Anny Kennedy's abduction soon

spread wide and far; a magistrate of some intelligence—a man, indeed, of *some* "wisdom and discretion," came to the aid of the Mayor of the town, and George Blundell was brought before their worships.

The proofs of at least participation in the legal offence became satisfactorily established against him. To say nothing of Grace Carroll, Patrick Donnelly swore that George Blundell was one of those who had bound and gagged him; and the circumstances of his stealthy entry into his lodgings about day-break; the finding the loose outside coat, the slouched hat, and the mask upon the chair in his bed-room; and last, though not least, his having gone to bed without fully undressing, together with the soils upon the clothes he had slept in, formed strong corroborative testimony—neither did any one forget that in just such a coat, hat, and mask, each of the abductors had entered the premises of Connor Kennedy.

George Blundell vainly tried to shatter or shake the chain of evidence wound round him. Indeed, he met legal proofs with nothing but angry or impassioned assertions. He proclaimed his innocence; he clamoured to be set free, vehemently and absurdly pledging life and honour; and swearing to the pledge by the most awful name that Anny Kennedy should quickly be restored to her guardian, were she to be found on the face of the earth. The directing magistrate naturally regarded all this but as a boyish *ruse* to escape the

consequences which hung over the prisoner's head, scornfully expressing his wonder at the silliness, which would expect, or even seem to expect, that such proposals should be complied with.

Mr. Connor Kennedy was present during the investigation. He sat alone and apart, still shedding tears, rocking his person to and fro, and not uttering a word. George Blundell fixed his eye upon him; appealed to him for protection or confidence, and asked him to become legal security for his reappearance, provided he were allowed to issue forth on his Quixotic expedition for the recovery of Anny; but Mr. Kennedy would not raise up his eyes, and, in addition to his former gesticulation, only clasped his hands together. In fact, George Blundell was fully committed to prison.

CHAPTER XV.

For a good distance, the way taken by Anny Kennedy, or rather by her self-elected guardians, was a long, rough, bye-road; then, much to her personal relief, though she cared little about it, after rolling over soft turf, the car stopped. A solitary mud cabin, one of those inhabited by the very poorest of the peasantry, appeared before Anny; and she was lifted down from her chariot of little ease, and carried through its low door-way into the interior apartment; two miserable chambers forming the whole of the space, which its tattered thatched roof covered.

Here was a single dipt-candle; the earthen floor was uneven and unswept; the mud walls were damp and bare; rafters and wattles, blackened by smoke, canopied Anny's head; and the only furniture consisted of two ricketty, rush-bottomed chairs, and a bedstead to match.

Her conductors half-thrust her into the cheerless place, and then retired, securing, as well as it permitted, the door upon her. For a moment she stood in the middle of the floor, still pinioned and gagged. A woman, wrinkled, and of a bad countenance, entered, and, with a hand somewhat less rough than those which had last ministered about Anny's person, restored her to the use of her limbs and her tongue.

Could horror agreeably or fitly be expressed by a young and lovely face and form, Anny Kennedy might now be taken as a personification of it, as, first glaring fearfully around, her eyes finally fastened on those of her new attendant.

"Are you of my own sex?" she asked, in a beseeching, hopeless tremour of look and manner.

"You ax me that," answered the woman, "because the wrinkles are on my face, and because its fatures are hard-grained and forbiddin', but there was a time when my cheek was smooth and rosy, and my eye bright and good-humoured, and my lip red, and my foot light; and then I was blithe, and used to sing and laugh, as the others did, when we all went out a Maying; but I am changed now; changed before my time; wrinkled before my time; ay, and I know that something is come into my face, too, that was not in it at first; and although I have strength enough to run, I can't do it; the heart weighs me down; it is as heavy as lead; and it is rotten with sin."

"But still it is a woman's heart? It has still something of a woman's nature left in it?"

"Not a bit, I fear, not a bit; I am a devil on the face of the earth, hastening on to my grave, and afeard of the world to come."

"You have been sinful," continued Anny, touching, though against her will, the wretch's shoulder, "you have been sinful, and sin has brought you sorrow?"

"Worse than sorrow, it has brought me, young mistress; worse than sorrow, it has brought me: it has brought me the untimely wrinkles, and the despair."

"Then save a fellow-creature from sin, from sorrow, and from despair, such as you now know and feel," pleaded Anny: "were you the most sinful being that ever outraged heaven, heaven is good! One act of Christian charity, such as I implore at your hands, may bring upon your soul the grace of repentance, and then the grace of a forgiving God! Save me! You are still a woman, I say—Save me!"

"Spake lower," hoarsely whispered the premature crone, "and mind what you spake at all; there is a guard upon the dour."

"Tell me, good woman! Oh! tell me one thing at least! in whose power am I?"

"In the power of one that never yet used his power mercifully."

"The man who is called the strange man of the Inch?"

"Yes, asthore; it's in his hands you are."

"Oh God! oh God! Oh! if there is but a drop of compassion in you, let it melt and flow for me, then! Oh woman! good, good woman, whatever is in the power of human gratitude to do, I will do for you in return! you say you have been sinful, and that you are unhappy; I will take you to my very bosom; I will call you my friend, my deliverer, my earthly saviour; I will—humbly depending on Him for help—I will teach you to hope in God! I will pour the balm of hope, and as far as I know how, of repentance, upon the canker of sin, that you say is eating away your heart! Yes, by my prayers, I will endeavour to reconcile you with heaven; while we live together in this world, I will be the consoler, and—for Providence has given me the means to do it—the cherisher of your earthly lot! Yes, yes! and I will sooth your death-bed, too; I will whisper into your dying ear the promise of that mercy, from your God, which I now kneel to beg of you for myself!"

The woman intertwined her fingers, crossed her hands over her forehead and eyes, and sobbed.

"Oh, I see it!" pursued Anny, "compassion for a woman in misery is yet in your nature! you will—you will—be my best friend, and preserver?"

"Whist!" said the wretch, as she hastily uncovered her face. Tears, newly struck out of the

rock—her own heart—trickled through furrows made by the wrinkles that she had truly called untimely; and, as she raised her skinny finger to claim attention, her eyes fixed kindly, humanely, and, indeed, almost with the expression of the womanly protection for which Anny had pleaded, upon her unhappy young prisoner.

"Yes, the hour of your thrial is come; but, be of stout heart; lift up your sperrits, and pray the good God you believe in!"—

The woman turned her eyes towards the croaky, creaking door; it was flung open, and the bug-bear of our tale stood within its threshold.

"And the time is come, too, to use the paper, that the Mayor of Wind-gap gave you," whispered the woman suddenly.

"Retire!" said the strange man of the Inch, in a voice of stern and established authority. The miserable individual he addressed did not seem to have the slightest power of daring to disobey his command. She quickly passed him, and left the apartment. He closed the door.

After the whispered hint of her late attendant, Anny recollected that, since the day—not very long ago, indeed—upon which Maurteen Maher had given her the document in question, she had taken care to keep it about her person: now, while her heart throbbed almost to bursting, and while her eye remained as if spell-bound upon the countenance of the abhorred individual with whom she

found herself alone, Anny confusedly searched for it. But, in her great agitation, as also in her womanly disinclination to manifest her actions, Anny's trembling fingers made a useless attempt.

Her companion turned round and approached her. As he advanced, she retreated, step by step.

"Now, beautiful Anny, do not shun me in this way," he said, whether in a tone of conciliation, or of irony, it must have been an experienced and a nice ear which could have judged. "This is certainly not a very elegant place to pay my respects to you in; but it is by necessity, not by choice, that I meet you under its lowly roof. There was no admission for me in your own house; I would not take the liberty of inviting you to mine, as it is a bachelor's establishment, you know; and, therefore, we meet upon the first neutral ground nearest at hand; but no matter where, dearest girl, since I at last enjoy the bliss of speaking with you;—of declaring to you how much I have suffered in the want of such an opportunity, since the first blessed day my eyes rested upon you; or, indeed, as the sensible people about here say, my *one* eye,—though, perhaps, if it were necessary, I could show, for your particular satisfaction, a pair of them; and so, my beloved Anny Kennedy——"

"Man!" interrupted Anny, "dreadful, though, let me tell you, not *now* dreaded man! dare not to come near me, if you would not trample upon my corpse." Her hands were still moving rapidly about her person.

"Tut! tut! my all-beauteous queen; 'tis a sin in you, a mortal sin, to talk so; leave death to revenge himself on old age and deformity, but speak of living, and of living only, and for happiness, too, while your young bloom is upon you. Enchanting Anny! I am not the scarecrow you have been used to think I am; come, I can woo with smiles, if you wish it, as nice as any petit maître." He took her hand, and encircled her with his arm; a scream of direst agony burst from Anny.

"Be calm, dearest girl, be calm! *I* do not intend to be rough or offensive; there, sit you down, and do not tremble so;" and he placed her, rather gently for him, upon one of the ricketty chairs, and sat upon the other, some distance from her.

Anny glared at him with a frenzied eye, and, with both her hands, grasped her frail seat, as if it could have been a protection to her.

"Oh, yes, yes, I see it;—they have been frightening you with absurd stories of me, Anny; and I told you as much at our first interview;—Oh, to be sure, the old gabblers have put it into your head, that the good, respectable devil, (I always speak deferentially of every body, 'tis a safe habit,) and myself have been 'hail-fellows, well-met;' but I don't recollect the exact spot of ground, or the exact ship, or even the little drinking parlour, in which we have ever yet sat down together. One thing, however, I do frankly admit;—I am, by nature, the adorer, the slave, the humblest, the most abject slave, of woman's beauty. It ever has ruled,

and it now does, and it ever must, rule my lot on earth; and if there be another, and a happier, and a pleasanter world, in that other, too; come, dearest Anny, and I call you sensible Anny, into the bargain, because I know every body gives you a character for understanding and intellect, beyond your years;—but, come, as one of the most buggaboo things about me, have they not told you of a one-half of my visage that is demoniscally frightful? and of a certain mark upon this cheek, which you have not yet seen?—and, yet, beautiful Anny, need I tell you, that I can refute all their gossip, as I now do their humbug tales, upon *this* score, at least? pray do look, Anny; do look up at me, and see if the mark of the devil's claw is really visible to your maiden eye."

There certainly was a smile of male coquetry in the now unclouded brow of the strange man, as he fully unveiled his features; nor was the smile wanting in stern beauty. And gashes certainly appeared, though at present cicatrized upon his hitherto disguised cheek; but none that could not be accounted for, by fair encounter, on the battle-field, nor reconciled with a general impression of manly comeliness. At a somewhat younger age, and without a wound, the strange man's countenance must certainly have been handsome. As he playfully twitched off his black handkerchief, Anny's nerves quivered almost to madness, or dissolution; so confused and so enervated was her state of mind, that Grace Carroll's late anecdotes

had real power over it; and she could not help expecting to see, upon the half of his face hitherto shut up (like an awkward wing of an old house, that is not to be let along with the rest of the premises,) the fearful marks which her poor maid, nay, which even the strange man himself had hinted, might be found stamped upon it. All feelings are, in their strength, relative; and when Anny discovered, however, that there was nothing so very terrible in the appearance or expression of the whole of the strange man's features, she certainly experienced a little relief.

"Well, Anny, after all they say, am I, or am I not, a proper man enough?" again approaching her; for even the slight change in Anny's sensations did not escape his practised observation.

But now her agonies returned; nay, became augmented. Her hands suddenly ceased their rapid and nervous search, and she clasped them tightly together, as, in deep despair, she muttered to herself—

"Gone, gone, gone—and my last hope with it!"

"What is gone? and what do you mean by that pretty phrase, my beauty?" He still moved his chair; she had pushed hers close to the wall.

The smile and glance, accompanying these words, produced through Anny's frame that kind of spasmodic affection of disgust, which might have been inspired by the sudden and near appearance of a loathsome reptile.

"Have mercy on me!" she cried, falling upon her knees.

"The rather do I ask *you* to have pity on *me*," he answered, stooping to raise her up. She rebounded to her feet, screaming forth—

"Touch me not, villain—foul villain, touch me not!—I am not weak nor unprotected, although but a girl, and alone with you.—Heaven is my strength and my protector—and will be your punisher!"—Again she retreated as far as she could from him.

"Ha! ha! by the rood, I think I am stepping back into my boyhood, when it used to be my silly creed that smiles and tears alone, to say nothing of knee-bending, were a woman's persuaders.—Ha! ha!—vanity, vanity, oh! dear vanity! thou art the last foible to abandon us!—Yes, some folly whispered to me that, forsooth, I ought to try to flatter you into good humour;—well, no matter;—but, as the old saying goes—'One fool makes many; but the old fool is worse than any.' But now we change tack, my brisk little beauty. By heavens! I love to grapple, either in war, or in love, with whatever promises, by a good, courageous struggle, to make victory the sweeter!—Up with speaking-trumpet, first, however, before broadsides and hangers; and so, listen to me, I say, Anny Kennedy—First, I love you;—ay, dote on you; ay, more than ever I did in my life upon girl or woman, excepting one girl, a long time ago, who can now make no question between us:

or, at least, no question to my disadvantage. But that is not all—There is yet another motive which urges me to be friends with you—Your father and myself were, once upon a time, very dear friends and——"

"Hah!" interrupted Anny, "my father and you?—And how, then,—" and she could utter no more.

"How, then, does it follow, you would ask, that I see any reason to wish to make his daughter, also, my dear friend—ay, and upon my own terms? —I have taken the question from your own dear lips; and I will answer it—thus:—Yes, Anny Kennedy, it is exactly because your father and I were such very dear friends that your father's daughter is here, to-night."

"If you knew him so well, who was my father?"

"Who was your father?—Who *is*, you mean? The man who, very naturally, has brought you up; the man you live with; the man from whose house I have enticed you hither."

"He is not!—I know he is not!—You now invent a falsehood for some devilish purpose!"

"No, Anny; I am sure of what I say; Connor Kennedy is your father; though, so closely was it his practice to keep his little amusements, that neither I nor any one else can hint to you who your mother might have been. Yes; and that same Connor Kennedy once was the dear friend I have spoken about. A reptile!—" continued the

strange man, suddenly bursting into passion, and stamping on the clay floor, while his brows became tangled into a hateful frown, his cheeks pale, his eyes flashing, his lips fiercely curving, and almost frothing—"A reptile!—First, a low, mean, crawling-reptile—then, a slimy, wriggling, slippery, evading reptile—and at last, an ungrateful, base, dastardly, reptile—who, while he was nurtured *here*—here on my heart—and while I slept—trustingly, happily slept—stung me, right over that very heart—ay, shot and spat his own very venom into it, till its core and veins became poisoned—poisoned into a circulation of liquid, running fire—poisoned into rage—into madness—into detestation of its fellow hearts—and till, at length, it can feel no joy but of that revenge upon him, in something like the fashion of wrong for wrong—measure for measure!"

He strode up and down the small apartment, as might a yet untamed tiger in his new cage. Anny was terrified into absolute silence. He suddenly stopped and looked upon her; and his features half-changed into a different though, a not less fearful expression, as he went on—

"You have heard me, Anny Kennedy!—Your father was that viper to me! after heaping kindness upon his head—and—idiot that I was!—casting my heart's affection, too, upon the heap—he robbed me—meanly, treacherously, robbed me of the woman whom, in early youth; I loved better than my own soul—and who, had he permitted

her to become mine, might have swayed and softened that soul into something good among men—and, perhaps, saved it for a hereafter!—But tush, tush!—no matter now!—We are quits at last!—You, Anny Kennedy, stand before me—*his* daughter—Connor Kennedy's daughter!—Ay, and by heaven, full as beautiful, and I believe as pure, as her of whom he plundered me!"

Anny's shrieks again arose terrifically.

"The paper! the paper!—" whispered a voice close at her ear. Despairing, and agonized as she was, Anny could, with an instant's glance, ascertain that the voice came through a chink in the slight and frail wall, or rather partition, at her back.—"God help me! I have it not!"—she answered, aloud.—And then her poor shrieks continued, piercing up higher and higher. The awakened ruffian held her in his grasp. Her delicate attire became discomposed; her maiden neck despoiled of its fragile covering. By a touch of her own spasmed hands, she ascertained this fact: and instantly glancing downwards, farther discovered a sealed paper, half-pushing out from beneath her corset;—one moment's strength she was then able to summon up;—nerved by it, she hurled her assaulter some distance from her;—snatched the now fully recognised document from its hiding place; stretched it forward to him at arm's length; and, panting and gasping, and swallowing down her words, said—

"Here—read this—'tis for

He plucked it from her hand. She crossed her arms over her bosom, and was still able to stand upright, on her tottering limbs, watching him. It has been noticed that there was but one feeble taper in the miserable apartment. To this he went; broke the heavy and rude seal of the letter addressed to him, and began to peruse it.

Anny's eyes devoured his movements, and the expression of his features. The talisman was in his hand!—For good or for evil to her?—She saw him start—frown—look amazed and baffled—angry and tamed—incredulous and shaken——: twice he read the writing, and then hollowed out —"A lie!—a lie, by the heaven!—Who gave you this?"—springing back, and scowling upon Anny.

She was about to pronounce her old friend's name; but although Maurteen Maher had not formally bound her to secrecy—nay, although, in a jocose way, he had told her to give his compliments, with the letter, to the strange man—still, a generous fear of evil result that night to him, at the hands of so desperate a character, checked her tongue, and she answered that she would not reveal who was the writer.

"What!—refuse to yield up the author of this annoying falsehood!—Do you not dread my vengeance?"

"No! I dread you, now, in nothing!"—she courageously answered:—"for, attempt to deny it, as

you may—the paper tells you truth—and you know it does—and I am safe! and I defy you!" ——she sank down at last.

The ferocious, as well as strange, man, after looking at her, scrutinizingly, and, perhaps, at last, kindly, seemed awed; at least, by her words and manner, if, indeed, they had not helped to convince him of the assertions of Maurteen Maher's epistle;—and he muttered aside—

"By the word! and that speech was not like the daughter of Connor Kennedy and some unknown obscure peasant—"

He then placed his hand upon a chair; raised it up slowly; put it down again, in the middle of the floor; sat upon it, his hands hanging by his side; and continued to gaze, attentively, if not respectfully, at Anny.

She was still sunk upon her weak limbs, powerless, but not afraid, before him; her gentle arms were still closely folded over her neck. After a pause, he arose; pushed open the crazy door, and called loudly into the other apartment—"A cup of water here!"

Immediately Anny's late attendant re-entered, with the beverage he had demanded;—"Ask that young lady to taste it," he continued:—"And, hark ye; place her cloak round her shoulders, and seat her as comfortably as you can upon the bedside."

"I will sit up," said Anny, "if I can; but not if you approach me."

"I will not touch you, now," he answered, in a tone which Anny could not at all understand.

With the assistance of the woman, she was, however, soon disposed of at her ease, comparatively speaking.

"Leave us again——" resumed the strange man; and, as before, his vassal hurried out of the room.

"Let her stay—let her stay!" requested Anny.

"No, if you please; for I now really wish to interchange a word with you, which no one must overhear. She is, however, outside this door, and a loud sound of your voice may call her.—Be calmer, therefore, I entreat you;—and when I do entreat you, be assured you may be calm.—You told me, awhile ago, that you were not Connor Kennedy's child. What grounds had you for saying that?"

"His own assertions," answered Anny—"which I take as the truth, sooner than those of any other living creature."

"Hum—that's nothing;—nothing at all. Has he not told you who really are your parents?"

"No; I know not, from any source of information, who are my father and mother; but I am sure that Connor Kennedy is not my father—and I am also sure that if you knew my father, as you assert, you must have known my mother too; and that, therefore, this may procure us both more particular information on the subject."

She undid from her neck the riband which sustained the miniature-portraits of which mention has before been made, and handed the locket to him.

Again he hurried to the taper; again he became passionately and wildly affected; and after some time asked her,—"And from whose hand did you receive this?"

"From my mother's—on her dying bed."

"You speak the holy truth, now?"

"I do—to the utmost of my belief and knowledge."

"Well, that's enough—that must do;" he again fixed his eyes upon the locket, turning it from side to side. He paused—he sighed—he smiled—he laughed. He rose up deliberately, muttering—"a strange, strange world."

"Girl, I am cheated out of my revenge for the present;"—he resumed, aloud;—though, perhaps, not quite that, either; let us not conclude too hastily: we will look into this affair;—and even if my dear revenge does escape me in this shape, there may be another road to an old,—a long-hoped object."

Anny was left alone—she had scarce leisure to return thanks to Heaven when the priestess of these mysterious ceremonies once more reappeared before her.

"The paper makes you quiet for the present," she said—"God grant that things may turn up

so as to keep us both quiet for the time to come."

Tears were again in the unhappy creature's eyes; Anny threw her arms round her neck—placed her head confidingly on her sinful shoulder, and cried plentifully over the beatings of her sinful heart.

CHAPTER XVI.

Even upon occasions almost common-place to other men, George Blundell was the creature of passion. It will not, therefore, be wondered at that, in his present situation, he felt fearfully affected;—in fact, the world had scarcely yet tamed down, in the slightest degree, his youthful impulses to prepossession on any object. His love for Anny, and her love for him, had become the very essence of his existence. An anticipation of losing her, when only called up, in moments of real security, by self-tormenting fancy, had never failed to melt him into tears, or rouse him into absurd vehemence; while he used to sit, quite sure of her affections, and of her guardian's permission to visit her, alone at his winter fire-side, or upon the roots of an old tree, or upon the river's bank, in summer.

It would, therefore, be difficult to describe him

in his present abode. The door of his cell was closed upon him. He stood in the middle of its narrow floor. "I have lost her!" he said—"she has been forced from me for ever! and it is my father," he added, laughing idiot-like—"'tis my own father, to whom I am indebted for that!"—This idea grew into certainty, until he nearly felt the impulse to dash himself headlong against the rough walls that surrounded him. Despair—dull, dogged despair followed. Against one of those walls he now leaned his right shoulder; his arms, we may say, fell from him, and hung unmoved at his sides. He could not be said to think, or, perhaps, even distinctly to feel. He subsequently called to mind, that, after his sullen, leaden fit, though at what time he could not tell, he had become suddenly, and, as it were, only physically impelled to rush to the door of his prison, in the mad and vague thought of bursting it open; and that then he had fallen down on his mattress, quite exhausted, and forgetful of every thing.

A night and part of a day passed on, and he seemed to sink into a gloomy, brooding, idle moroseness. Food had been offered to him, but he did not even think of it. The turnkey had appeared, and disappeared, and no word escaped his lips; nor had sleep relieved him for one instant.

It was again the noon of day. The turnkey entered; placed a letter in his hands; and, making a sign of caution, quitted the cell.

George Blundell glanced at the superscription, and he was instantly erect on his feet, his face flushed, and his hand trembling. Muttering its contents to himself, with dried and white lips, he hastily ran over the epistle.

"What!" he cried, "what is this? am I really the maniac wretch I have shuddered to think I might become? Have I not toiled hard to cool down my boiling blood, and to still my throbbing temples? or have my eyes lost their power of sense? No; it is a letter, and in her hand-writing. Well; I may have misunderstood its meaning. I have been in this place for some time, without sleep or food, and, perhaps, am not now able to see or to understand rightly; so I will try and man myself, and then read it again."

He did so; it began,

"I am compelled to write to you by an authority which I must not gainsay—"

"Compelled to write to me? And was compulsion necessary, Anny? By an authority you must not gainsay? What authority? And she was preceding the word "authority" with the term "dear," and then blotted it out. There is fearful mystery in this. But let me read on.

"And I write for the purpose of informing you that you are no longer to think of me as you have done; that, by all and every means in your power, you must expel from your heart its love for me. If I am to judge by the struggle in my own bosom, this will be a truly difficult task for you; but you

are called upon to attempt it; nay, to master it. In explanation, I am permitted only to say, that I never can be your wife, for that an impassable barrier has been suddenly placed between us. But, whatever may be the consequences, I will add that I am very, very miserable in the new circumstances which surround me. Is it not a terrible thing to feel repugnance where I am called on to bestow affection—where, indeed, it is now my duty to bestow it? For farther satisfaction on this unhappy subject, I can but refer you to him who *was* my guardian—Mr. Connor Kennedy. Farewell. Farewell.

ANNY."

Spite of continued interruptions on the part of George Blundell, we have given the remainder of this letter in an unbroken form to the reader. The nature of his interruptions will be easily guessed at, though we do not venture to define them. We can only coldly narrate certain conclusions upon which the young man's mind jumped; after fully comprehending the words—and, indeed, but the words alone—of what had been written to him.

A barrier? and one that he could not pass? Who dared to erect it? Who dared to say that he was unable to over-leap any barrier, no matter what in nature, which the craft, or the cunning, or the skill, or the malice, or the villany of man

was capable of building up between him and his soul's idol? Tush!—fools or scoundrels were but imposing on her fears, or her judgment. Tush! by heaven, he thought it were an easy thing to swim across an Atlantic without resting, or clear an Alp at a bound, so that Anny Kennedy could be made sure of at the far side of either.

But he would still try to understand this mysterious letter.—Again, what was the nature of the barrier it spoke of? She could never be his wife. Why? George Blundell suddenly felt that he comprehended the whole question. Anny Kennedy could, now, never be his wife, only because she had become, or was about to become, the wife of another! Of what other? His father? No. Evil as was the nature of that father, a thought so horrible could not be entertained. "I refer you to him *who was* my guardian;" *who was* my guardian. And how had he ceased to be her guardian? How, but by changing position towards her;—how, but by becoming her husband! Oh! I thank God for that thought; for now my hand can fall—unstained by a parent's blood—upon the head of the true hypocrite, and of the true villain. Blood! did I say blood? Fy, fy; no, not that: but I will question him; I will question him: and, were he coiled up tenfold in his duplicity, he must give plain answers to an outraged and most miserable creature."

George Blundell turned to the door of his cell, as

if to depart; he soon became reminded that he was a prisoner, and then he again fell upon his straw, exhausted and groaning wretchedly.

For many hours, indeed, he lay as still as if life had quitted him, his blood-shot eyes vaguely fixed on a point. The turnkey again entered; he deliberately arose and demanded who had been the bearer of the letter? The man could, or would, only answer that it had been delivered at the jail door by a person unknown to him. A heavy bribe induced him, however, not only to furnish his prisoner with writing materials, but also to engage to have conveyed to its destination a letter which George Blundell proposed immediately to begin. So, the young man wrote to Mr. Connor Kennedy; and, when the epistle was despatched, he turned to his food and ate it voraciously.

The following were the contents of this letter.

"I presume, sir, it is not without your knowledge that I have received to-day a note from Anny; she who was to have been *my* Anny: mine, by the ties of mutual and admitted affection;—by mutual pledges;—by mutual vows and oaths.—But now she informs me that she never can be my wife; for that 'there is an impassable barrier suddenly placed between us;' and she instructs me to apply to you for a full explanation of her strange and obscure words. You know well, for it must

have been by your contrivance, that your servant gave the false testimony of which I am momentarily the victim; you know well I cannot wait upon you; and that, therefore, my demand for an explanation must, for the present, confine itself to writing. But I caution you not to dally or trifle with me. No one is better aware than yourself how unjustly I am detained here; but, Mr. Kennedy, as surely as I am an innocent man, I shall speedily be free again; and then, sir, we can meet face to face, should your refusal to satisfy me at present make necessary so dangerous an interview.

"Yours,

"As you may deserve of me,

"George Blundell,"

In vain did the writer of this spirited epistle turn his eye to the prison door, for hours and hours after he had sent it away, in expectation of an answer. Mr. Kennedy vouchsafed no reply, either personally or in writing. George Blundell roared, and foamed, and stamped, and threatened: still to no purpose. Another sleepless, horrible night passed over his head:—another wretched morning half-dawned upon him through the single iron-grated window, or rather aperture, of his cell. About noon, perhaps, his usual attendant reappeared, placed a packet in his hand, and at once left the apartment. George Blundell eagerly tore it open.

It contained a very small saw, a file, a little bottle of oil, and a note without signature or direction, and certainly not in Mr. Kennedy's hand-writing.

"If you desire to learn tidings of Anny Kennedy, lose no time in availing yourself of the means of escape herewith afforded to you. With the file and the saw cut away three of the bars of your prison window; be sure to use the oil freely; it will prevent noise, and facilitate your work. Go on steadily and cautiously, and you need fear no interruption. If, by the time your door is secured for the night, you have succeeded, remove the bars. You will find a ladder to the window, on the outside; descend it at once; but take care not to do so before the hour already specified. At the foot of the ladder, you will meet a person awaiting you; accost him not; don't utter a whisper; but follow him silently, and he will lead you to one who can fully satisfy you on all the points you at present want to have cleared up."

Carefully, very carefully, notwithstanding the feverish state of his mind and body, did George Blundell follow these directions of his unknown, though experienced, friend. With might and main he worked, and without an instant's cessation; and yet so stealthily that he could scarce have disturbed a mouse in his cell. Before the last nightly visit had been paid to him, his task was done; the bars being cut through at either

She undid from her neck the riband which sustained the miniature-portraits of which mention has before been made, and handed the locket to him.

Again he hurried to the taper; again he became passionately and wildly affected; and after some time asked her,—"And from whose hand did you receive this?"

"From my mother's—on her dying bed."

"You speak the holy truth, now?"

"I do—to the utmost of my belief and knowledge."

"Well, that's enough—that must do;" he again fixed his eyes upon the locket, turning it from side to side. He paused—he sighed—he smiled—he laughed. He rose up deliberately, muttering—"a strange, strange world."

"Girl, I am cheated out of my revenge for the present;"—he resumed, aloud;—though, perhaps, not quite that, either; let us not conclude too hastily: we will look into this affair;—and even if my dear revenge does escape me in this shape, there may be another road to an old,—a long-hoped object."

Anny was left alone—she had scarce leisure to return thanks to Heaven when the priestess of these mysterious ceremonies once more reappeared before her.

"The paper makes you quiet for the present," she said—"God grant that things may turn up

George did so, and rapidly entered a room at their head. He looked around him; he was alone; but he heard a heavy foot coming up after him; and, in a few seconds, his flashing and questioning eyes fixed upon the person of the strange man of the Inch.

CHAPTER XVII.

The youth started back, confounded—"So, you are your own man again," observed his companion, smiling dryly.

"And I owe my liberation to you—father?"

"To be sure you do; who else but a near friend would go to any trouble about you?"

"You wrote the note, and sent me the things that accompanied it?" again asked George, thoughtfully, and with a painful motive for his curiosity.

"I—I—I—and was not that said note to the purpose? Didn't it understand business?" said the strange man, with a strange laugh.

"May I inquire who gave you the very useful information it contained? The confidant of your plot for my escape, I suppose? The person who awaited me at the ladder's foot?"

"Do not speak of the *ladder's foot*," my boy; 'tis an awkward expression. But you are right in one thing, and wrong in another; or, rather, you are right and wrong together. I consulted with nobody—nor was it necessary I should have done so—upon the means of getting you out of that little, high, iron-barred window—— You foolish cub!—do you think nobody ever cut through an iron bar, before this evening, but yourself?—and as to the man who led you from that place to this, he is here with you now; for, in truth, I only shunned the eyes of the persons of this house, to take off my disguise before I would come up to you;—because, although they are particularly in my confidence—and a good many others, too, along with them,—I don't want to make a bother about every thing."

"So then," said George, "you know all about the file, and saw, and oil, from your own experience?"

"Certainly, my lad;—and do you, at this moment, wish that I had never known any thing about them?"

George Blundell remained for some time sitting thoughtfully. Without his observation, the strange man had closely watched him, and now he said, in his most possibly-softened tone—

"I suppose you have had suspicions of me, George?"

"Yes," answered George, deeply, and hoarse-

George Blundell glanced at the superscription, and he was instantly erect on his feet, his face flushed, and his hand trembling. Muttering its contents to himself, with dried and white lips, he hastily ran over the epistle.

"What!" he cried, "what is this? am I really the maniac wretch I have shuddered to think I might become? Have I not toiled hard to cool down my boiling blood, and to still my throbbing temples? or have my eyes lost their power of sense? No; it is a letter, and in her hand-writing. Well; I may have misunderstood its meaning. I have been in this place for some time, without sleep or food, and, perhaps, am not now able to see or to understand rightly; so I will try and man myself, and then read it again."

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"And,—now,—little Anny's husband," continued the strange man, smiling quietly.

"The villain!—the deep, deep, hypocritical villain!"

"Ah! yes, indeed; you may well call him that."

"So!" continued George, walking like a madman about the room; "I read aright, then, the meaning of her letter to me, the other day; this *was*—*this is* the impassable barrier, so suddenly placed between us!"

"Her letter to you the other day?—You have received one from her, have you, since you were betrayed to prison by that man?"

"I have—and here it is," answered George, snatching it from his pocket.

"May I read it?"

George handed it to him. He perused it attentively.

"Why, ay, this certainly was enough to make you come to the true conclusion. Ay, ay, 'he who *was* her guardian;' any one may complete the sentence by adding, 'And who is my husband.'"

"Sir," pursued George, "before I take a step —and a serious one, give me the fullest proof that Kennedy and Anny are, at present, man and wife."

"Suppose I could not adduce stronger proof than this very letter, which you have yourself just handed to me, were it not sufficient?—Proof

positive, however, I can and will give you, many of that anon.—First, let us see if we understand each other as to the character and nature of the man you are called upon to reckon with.—You have heard, I presume, that, though now rich, he once was poor—abjectly poor—that the riches he now possesses are the rightful property of the very person who rescued him from his low estate; and that with the most unutterable ingratitude, and with the most devilish duplicity, he disinherited, in fact, his early benefactor, who loved him?"

George Blundell nodded assent.

"Well, as we pass along, we may reason a little upon this Mr. Connor Kennedy. Have you any good grounds for being sure that, at about forty, he is not the same kind of man he was at about twenty? That he is now incapable of deceiving *you* in something of the same way, though not half so foully as he once deceived the patron and cherisher of his youth?"

"No—I have no such grounds."

"What has been your own opinion of him, during your acquaintance with him?—Favourable or unfavourable?"

"Unfavourable; even in the teeth of his ward's assurances, I always disliked his manners, his language, and his appearance; and suspected his principles."

"And you might have made worse guesses than those. Very good. Let us go on coolly—

You waited on Connor Kennedy the other day—or you met him in his house, I believe, though you had not wished to see him, and then you pleaded hard for an interview with Anny. How did he act towards you on that occasion?"

"I remember it well; with cunning and want of candour;—first, he would have evaded my question altogether, then he left the room, promising to use his influence with her to come down to me;—and at last I got a message importing that she would not come down to me, in consequence of his prohibition; oh! I do remember it."

"Good again. After that, however, you did see her, and became reconciled with her; almost immediately, her abduction followed; and then, to put you out of the way, a trumpery charge of being concerned in that abduction was made against you;—and upon it—mainly supported by one of his own warrants, mark you—you were sent to the common jail, from which I have just released you. Couple all these facts with Anny's letter to you, and do you longer require proofs of the present real state of the case? Proof, in fact, of my assertion that Connor Kennedy is now the husband of the woman who had sworn to wed no man but yourself?"

"No!" cried George Blundell, "it is as clear as the day-light."

"Well; still a little step farther. You are referred, I see, by this letter, to an explanation

with your old friend, Mr. Kennedy; have you demanded it?"

"I have! I have!" replied George, his impatience and fury every moment increasing.

"And was it quite a satisfactory explanation?"

"Hell and earth! do not mock at me! The villain has returned no answer of any kind!"

"There, again. But observe the innocence of the world's ways, shown by the artless young creature who wrote you this letter. His dupe and his victim, by means and wiles which, as yet, we do not even guess at, she is still simple-hearted enough to think that the man who has deceived you both, and, by subornation of perjury, cast you into a dungeon, whence he could dream of your departure only by the road to the gallows—that *he*—that such a man—would stand before your face, and give you a fair and full account of the machinery by which he robbed you of your young, and beautiful, and accomplished, and pure-minded Anny."

George Blundell was now walking slowly up and down the apartment, his brows dragging down over his burning eyes, his hands clenched, and his teeth sunk into his bleeding lip.

"I knew that man, of old—that Connor Kennedy," pursued his companion, speaking in a low, deliberate manner.

George Blundell suddenly stopped, and looked intently at him.

"Yes, George, my son; I knew him well,

more than twenty years ago. Attend to me, boy. You are now about to hear more of me than you have yet become acquainted with; and my story may help to enlighten you still more upon the steps you ought to take in your present great and unmerited misfortunes. Attend to me.

"I have already told you that I left my native country in my youth; that I was shipwrecked, and cast naked, friendless, and penniless, on a far-off coast; and that, afterwards, I became a merchant, and realized wealth by many years of profitable traffic. In this latter statement, however, I did not rightly instruct you, and for the following reasons. At the first meeting between us, which you are capable of remembering, I found you a brave, bold boy, and I did not wish, by giving you a real account of my path to fortune, to arouse, perhaps, your boyish wish to follow in my steps. Although most unfortunate and most injured, and, the world would add, no strict honourer of some of its laws, I would not hold out my life as an example to you. No; I wished you to remain in your native land, boy, honoured, respected, and happy. You are already aware that my first visit to Ireland, after my shipwreck, was for the purpose of seeking you out, and providing for the nurture of your infancy and your childhood; and——"

"Stop, father——" said George Blundell; "is

your real name that which you at present assume, and have given to me?"

"You anticipate me but by a little," answered the strange man of the Inch; "I had nearly come to that very point; I will, therefore, answer you distinctly. My name is Henry Stokesbury, not Philip Blundell."

"Impossible! he perished at sea! so, at least, those said who have ever mentioned that unhappy man to me."

"It is not impossible, George. It is true. I am the man. And need I, therefore, repeat to you that, twenty years ago, I knew your Connor Kennedy, well?"

"No, indeed," answered George; "although but vaguely acquainted with his story and yours, it has ever been my impression that you met with very unworthy treatment at his hands."

"Unworthy treatment!" scoffed the narrator, with one of his often terrible laughs. "You use charitable language, George, towards the destroyer of your father. And you are but vaguely acquainted, you say, with our joint story?—Well—a few words will soon supply that deficiency."

As he proceeded in his narration, Henry Stokesbury, whenever the recollection of his own early injuries wrought upon his fiery nature, seemed almost hurried into personal contact with the individual, and the circumstances to which he chiefly alluded; his tone and actions would become fear-

fully impetuous: his eyes would flash, his lips would foam. During other parts of his recital, his manner, and himself, seemed to change, on the contrary, into something of the freshness of youthful feeling; as if, indeed, feeling could still have been fresh within him. And again, when it was his object to work a purpose upon his listener, he would become cool and effective; giving expression to that mingled craft and passion which, perhaps, his life's course had interwoven in his character.

"George," he said, "I can commiserate your feelings and sufferings; for even as you feel, and suffer, I have felt and suffered; and even as you have been wronged, cajoled, and outraged, so have I been; nay, and in almost the same circumstances, and by the same man. You love your Anny; at your age, I loved a creature at least her equal; oh —Mary was, indeed, formed to soften the turbulent spirit of man, as does a night in June, when the air is still, and even its little breezes are nestling in the closed cup of the blossom? Oh yes—yes—I loved you, Mary,—and, gnarled as I am, the passion is in my pith to this day. And, George, I loved my mother—my good mother, too! and with a full and fond affection. But, in my boyhood I lost her. A few months after her death, I found, by chance, a relation of hers, about my own age, in the most wretched state of poverty. He was friendless, houseless, naked, starving —a foot-ball, to be kicked by others in their sport.

For my dead mother's sake, I protected the outcast, I snatched him to my bosom, and held firm tight there. I brought him to my father's house, and warmed and fondled him at his hearth. He eat with me at the same board; his raiment was as my own; I relished no sport, no pastime, which he did not share. I shared every thing with him—ay, even my heart; for even *him* I loved, thinking that I caught flittings of my mother's nature, and of her likeness, and of her character, in the milky blandness of his smiles; yea, in all he looked, or said, or did."

Stokesbury went on to describe, as others, even including himself, have described it, the double treachery of which he felt Connor Kennedy had been guilty. We compress his story; but, for the necessary purpose of fully displaying his character, we must venture, even at the risk of being accused of tautology, to report his own expositions upon certain points and circumstances.

Taking him up, therefore, at his continuation, of the account of his dire quarrel with his father, he speaks as follows:—

"My father snatched a deadly weapon, my cousin's arms were flung around me—'For the love of peace, and for God's love,' he whimpered into my ears, while tears streamed down his cheeks—ay, the very tears ran from his crocodile-eyes, as he softly cajoled me, in my mother's voice—and his wet cheek was laid to mine, and its watery chilness did, indeed, cool my boiling blood.

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'For the love of blessed peace, and for God's *dear* love,' he whimpered—and mark you, his arms still twined round me—'Do not, oh, do not, stand up before your father's wrath! I will be your friend with him—the friend that, as you, and Heaven know, I ought to be to you on every occasion!' ay, so he *said*, 'I will appease,' quoth he, 'your father's terrible passion—I will be the peace-maker between ye; I will reconcile the maniac parent with the hasty son; oh, turn away a moment from his door, and nothing will I leave undone to lead you back to it in peace! my heart's last drop, I will shed, if necessary to accomplish this! and" he continued, again appealing to Heaven, 'the heavens can judge that life itself were but a trifling sacrifice for him who has done every thing for me."

"So—I abided by the counsel of this cousin of mine. Driveller that I was! his influence over me had always been powerful; because, as I have said, my mother's features, my mother's voice, and my mother's tenderness of nature, seemed to be his; and the slightest word from that mother, during her suffering existence, and delivered in her plaintive accents, used ever to come upon my boyish stubborness, like gentle, taming music. So, so—my good cousin, led me to the threshold of my father's door; saw me depart from it; and returned into my father's house, shutting its door on himself. Afterwards, we often conferred together in the neighbourhood; for still, and still, he kept up

a show of endearing affection. And his efforts to persuade my father into a forgiving mood, were not, he said, as speedily successful as he had reckoned on, and he therefore advised a temporary absence from my native place, for the purpose of keeping from my father's ears gossiping stories to my prejudice. Again, I complied with his counsel, receiving from his hands liberal means, I know not how acquired, for my journey. Yes; I abandoned not only the paternal roof, but home itself; and I parted in rage against my father, because, as my cousin told me, forsooth, he would not be reconciled to his only son—his only child.

Whither I went, or who became my associates in my obscure exile, it is unnecessary to say. Twelve months elapsed; I heard, by chance, of my father's death, and I hurried home to possess my own inheritance, and to snatch my betrothed bride to my bosom. But before I had quite reached my journey's end, what were the tidings I learned, think you?"

We again pass over Henry Stokesbury's recapitulation of the acts of treachery with which he, and, indeed, the world at large, charged Connor Kennedy.

"I was not formed by nature to bear a wrong tamely," he continued; "I was not made of the sodden stuff that will yield to trampling, assuming whatever shape the trampler chooses to impress upon it. No! my brain took fire; it burned for vengeance! The law, as they call it, could, or

would, yield me none; not even technical redress. The parchments, which had ratified the robbery of my birth-right, were, of course, duly signed, and sealed, and delivered, as the phrase goes: ay, and properly witnessed, and carefully registered. —And, my Mary, she was in the villain's arms!"

George Blundell started up, sympathizing with the now fearful energy of the strange man.

"Yes, yes! I see you can understand me. And as you feel now for the irretrievable loss of your Anny, so felt I then for that of my Mary. Yes! a craven, with liquid ice circulating through his heart, might have whined, and wept, and told his story to the dull ears of the law, or of the world, craving a little pity of the listeners, and experienced, in return, the cold superciliousness bestowed by all upon the wretch and the outcast. But that I did not stoop to:—that I did not attempt to do. This I *did*,—I went to my father's house, to my own house, I should say; I burst in my own doors; —I stood upon mine own hearth; and I confronted the reptile,—the rat, who had mined his way thither. Oh! by the eternal heavens! it was a sight worth the seeing! That detected knave qualing before me! But not long did I allow him to quail; —I struck him to my foot!—I trod upon his carcass!—and I left him, as I thought, a venomous thing, with the life crushed out of him!

"But even in this he deceived me; ay, once again the cousin cozened me. He recovered his vile breath; he lived on his vile life:—yea, and he

has lived it on, to play with you the same game that he so adroitly practised upon me.

"Well, I was seized on the spot, while he yet enacted the part of the dead knave at my feet. I was dragged to a dungeon. I was put to the bar of justice;—no, not to the bar of justice; for justice would never had stood up for the despoiler, and wreaked her vengeance on the ouraged. No! but I was placed at that bar where wily villany is legalized in set terms. I cared little for my fate. I had been made a desperate man. My hopes of earthly happiness, my means of earthly subsistence, my every thing, had been torn from me; and at that bar there was but one chance I wished for. I longed, Oh! how I longed, to see my gentle cousin come forward to give his testimony against me! Nay, I slept not, night after night, before my trial, for pondering over and arranging the exposure which I should make of this monster before the world's face! But, on this occasion, he acted towards me as he did towards yourself, the other day, before the magistrates. With his own lips he spoke indeed, no word against either of us; from me he kept quite aloof; but his measures for the destruction of us both were, nevertheless, well taken, and well timed.—I have more to say to you on this subject.

"But, to continue my own frightful story. I cared not how they judged me. I hired no lawyer, no advocate. I attempted no defence of any kind. I was condemned. I was pronounced a

criminal, for having entered my own rightful dwelling, and for having punished under its roof the villain who had despoiled me of it, and, with it, my affianced wife! Ay, I was condemned—I was sentenced. Ay, by heaven's light, I was banished from my native country; lopped off, as a canker that infested! As a felon, they forced me from its shores:—ay, as a *branded* felon! Do ye hear me, George Stokesbury? As a *branded* felon, I say. Look! look! let your own eyes bear witness to the truth of my assertion! look at it well. The mark of infamy! Look at it, boy; burned into your father's flesh! look! look!"

Flakes of foam were on his lips; his maniac eyes rolled fearfully; and his voice was attenuated to a scream, as he tore away his vesture, bared his right arm, and exhibited to the almost equally agitated George, the foul escutcheon of his degradation.

There was a long pause, during which Henry Stokesbury walked impetuously about the room. At length he stopped; and, of a sudden, his passion seemed to have flown. He came close to George Blundell; he peered under the young man's darkened brow, and said,—

"You will remember that I have exposed this arm to you, for I will challenge your recollection of the fact. Let me also tell you, that when the red-hot, villain iron hissed into my blood, communicating its hellish ardour to my whole vital current, I felt,—I *felt*,—that, although not present, it

was Connor Kennedy's own hand which ruthlessly stamped on my body the ineffacible record of a living, walking disgrace!—You attend?"

"No word that you have said is lost upon me," answered George Blundell.

They were again silent; Stokesbury resumed, coolly:

"You have heard my story. Well, from my twenty years' experience of Connor Kennedy, I have been able to trace him in all his slimy wiles against yourself; apply a scale to *your* chapter of wrongs, and to mine own, and do they not tally? And are you, therefore, surprised that it should have been in my power to render you such a service?"

"No," replied George; "and you *can* explain to me the motives for Mr. Kennedy's whole course of conduct towards me?"

"Listen, and decide if I cannot: and, as I go on, observe, I charge you again, how close a parallel runs between his treatment of you, at present, and his treatment of me, long ago."

"Anny Kennedy was bequeathed, by a dying father, to the care of her infamous betrayer. The will which gave Connor Kennedy this right over her, also endowed Anny with a large fortune. She grew up a lovely girl. From the first bloom of her young charms, her practised guardian coveted her person; her wealth he had always thirsted after. So, he sought to writhe himself into her favour; and his drivelling vanity, misinterpret-

ing the common-place attentions she bestowed upon him, in gratitude for his care of her childhood, had nearly persuaded him of success, until his eyes were opened by the artless girl's admission of a preference for yourself. Then he endeavoured to wean her from you; but your Anny was faithful to you, George; and, by heaven, I can pity you the loss, at last, of that sweet girl's affection!"

"I ask not your pity, sir; pity, even from you, I spurn. 'Twould be but a poor satisfaction for all I have endured. Go on, sir, I pray you."

His tempter, having eyed him with a sneer of fiendish triumph, continued:

"When Connor Kennedy found that she loved you, dearly and unalterably, for the good character you bore, among other things—then began his plottings against you: your stolen visits to me he soon discovered. From my retired mode of life, and my necessary equivocal position and habits,—for I would not have been recognised as the felon Harry Stokesbury,—idle rumour had circulated many things to my prejudice. Kennedy also became aware of this fact, and turned it to his own account. By his secret agents, he added to the disreputable insinuations against me, and, by degrees, involved your name with mine, in the odium attendant on such lying stories. Nay, more. He actually caused outrages to be committed, and then had them charged on us both. Through the agency of a menial, a vile character whom he loads with bribes to ensure his services, he hired bravos, and,

by their hands, in the first instance, and, mark you, while they personated you and me, the old man's daughter by the river-side, was forced off.

"When you were charged as my accomplice in this act, I could not stand forward as your vindicator, because that must have led to my identification as Henry Stokesbury; but I silenced the silly proceeding in the manner I have already stated to you. Do you begin to comprehend the occurrences of the last few weeks?"

"I attend to every thing you say."

"Well, having failed on this occasion, a deeper plot was laid against your only earthly hopes of happiness; indeed, against your life.

"In the dead of the night, Anny Kennedy herself was torn from her home. Tell me, how was entrance gained into Kennedy's house? how could it have been, but by his connivance? And observe, again. For four hours after her abduction, no notice was taken of the fact by him or by his household, for four long hours. And at the end of that lapse of time, Connor Kennedy's own faithful servant was discovered, forsooth, tied to his bed-post, and gagged, and so forth; and when they made him free to use his tongue again, this fellow it was who accused you of having been a party in the outrage committed on Anny Kennedy: nay, farther, he swore before the sage magistrates, that you had even assisted to tie him up and gag him, and otherwise maltreat him, did he not?"

"I remember," assented George.

"Yes, and upon that ruffian's testimony, you were sent to prison; and upon that ruffian's testimony, you were to be tried and convicted, as a felon, had not I interfered to protect you; and, at least, sent, as I had been, from your native country, disgraced and—branded!"

"How did the hired abductors of Anny Kennedy dispose of her?" inquired George.

"They took her to a remote place, provided for the occasion, by her guardian;—guardian, indeed! Ha! ha! and there she was informed, and she believed the information, that you were the perpetrator of the violence committed upon her; ay, and there, by more atrocious measures than even these, your poor Anny was compelled to become the wife of Connor Kennedy."

"How compelled?—what other and more atrocious measures do you speak of?"

"I will answer you in due course. Now for a proof I have promised you of the truth of some of my statements."

Stokesbury struck his heel violently twice, or thrice, against the floor: a deliberate tread was heard coming up stairs; and Donnelly, Connor Kennedy's servant, entered the room.

"Do you know this man, George?"

"I do; he is the same you have just spoken of;—the same who swore falsely against me."

"Yes; he is that man. It was easy for me to surmise, knowing that he had been guilty of perjury, who had set him on, to destroy you; I sought

him out, therefore, and found him as willing to betray his employer for a bribe, as he had been to take one from him."

This was said in a low tone to George; Henry Stokesbury went on aloud:—"Sirrah! relate to this young gentleman, as you have already related to me, the plots in which you have been engaged against him."

In a cold and unimpassioned tone and manner, Donnelly complied, verifying Stokesbury's previous accounts to George Blundell, of the wiles, the treachery, and the baseness of Connor Kennedy; and to every question proposed by the young man, the scoundrel answered quietly, and to the purpose.

"From what motive did you engage in these matters with Mr. Kennedy?" demanded George Blundell.

"Why, then, 'pon my nate conscience, for the motive what people calls a long purse o' money."

"And you have since divulged Mr. Kennedy's secrets?" continued George.

"Yes, faith, an' so I have; an' does your honour want to know the motive, as you call it, over again? Ha! ha!"

"Yes, declare it."

"Glory to my sowl, then, bud it was for the motive of a longer purse of money than the one that went before it."

"You are satisfied, George?" demanded Stokesbury.

"Yes, yes, I am," muttered the youth.

"Go down stairs, then, and await me elsewhere," continued the strange man of the Inch; and Donnelly went away, accordingly, as unconcerned as if he had but performed some every day business.

George Blundell's feelings were sunk too deeply into him to allow of much exterior exhibition of them. He continued silent. Stokesbury observed him keenly, giving him leisure to cogitate as well as he could, for a necessary period of time, upon all that had been presented to his mind. At length, he suddenly renewed, close to him, the former question.

"You say you are satisfied?"

George started from his black reverie, and looked into the eyes of his interrogator.

"You spoke to me, sir?"

"*Are* you satisfied?" again asked Stokesbury.

"Satisfied, sir?—let me see. Perhaps I do not quite understand the drift of your question?"

"I have told you before, George, that I had returned to this native land of mine, which, in my boyish days, cast me from its bosom, as it might have done one of its weeds upon the waters, only for the purpose of promoting and fixing your happiness. I have told you, and you know I can

prove it, that, through me, great riches awaited you, like flowers strewn under your foot, along your path of life; and, dear boy, had your Anny but been left to you, all my hopes, and, perhaps, more than all my hopes, in your regard, might have been realized."

The lad groaned, and, suddenly turning, said,—

"Now I recollect something. You told me awhile ago that you would inform me by what means, and you called them atrocious when you alluded to them, Anny has been compelled to become that man's wife?"

"Ay, and so I did; and that is rather an important point. Let me explain it to you in a whisper."

He put his lips to George's ear, and slowly hissed into it a few words.

The youth started up ferociously.

"Beware, sir! Father, as you say you are to me, beware how you say *that!* You know not to what you urge me!"

"I state but the fact, boy. In that lonely and savage place, she could feel no hope of escape, and of re-establishment in the world, after his measures towards her, but by consenting to become his wife. But how do you think he made this really appear to the eyes of uninterested persons? Are you listening to me?"

"I am; go on."

"Why, Mr. Connor Kennedy has done no more, nor less, than impress upon the minds of the good Christians of his and our neighbourhood, that you, you, yourself, have been the cause of that certain blight on Anny's character; and that he, through pure Christian charity, has, by becoming her husband, sacrificed himself to bind up in a kind of legal technical way, her bruised reputation. And now, let me ask you, do these little facts help still farther to explain Anny Kennedy's letter to you in your dungeon?"

"All is explained," answered George, in a deep, shivering, inward voice; "Yes—the explanation is full; and, oh! it has changed my blood into hot venom, and my heart into the hardest stone!—merciless—merciless, it has made me!—The wrongs against my father and against myself were, to be sure, sufficient to inspire me with a deadly purpose;—yet I tried to push the thought from me, while it prompted merely an act of vengeance. But now do I cease to be an avenger!" —he continued, starting up—"now am I called upon, as if by the voice of heaven itself, to become the minister of justice!"

"Before this moment," continued Stokesbury, pretending not to have heard the last words, "I kept from you all avowal of a determination to which I had come, even before we had begun to speak—Now, however, I deliberately ask you—

does not the double traitor—the treble, the tenfold traitor, and villain—deserve, at my hands, what earthly law refuses to mete out to him—namely, punishment?"

"Why ask me such useless questions?—Had you but listened to me, I have already answered you."

"Perhaps, I might have returned to the better-loved land of my adoption, without deciding upon such a blow, had not the wrongs committed upon my son roused up, and added new rancour to those perpetuated upon myself;—had not I found that the villain who poisoned the source of my life's stream—not contented with that,—flung new infection into its current!—and shall he a second time escape me?—I ask you again, does not Connor Kennedy merit punishment?"

"Have some compassion on me! Do not lacerate me so! Connor Kennedy *shall* be punished."

"He shall, by heaven!—this very night, boy! Within this very hour, perhaps, I will avenge you! you and myself,—upon the closely-coiled, the fully gorged, and the self-secure reptile! Await me here—all my measures are arranged;—you are already an object of the scrutiny of their laws;—in a very short time so shall I be also;—when I return, be prepared to accompany me at the instant, towards a remote and safe place of refuge."

"Pshaw, father! Do not touch those pistols on the table!"

"And why not?—They are my doomed instruments of——punishment on Connor Kennedy."

"No—no! For that purpose—that holy purpose, they are mine!—No other living creature has a right to them! Let *me* have the weapons!"

"Well; well; I certainly had no intention to depute my office; and if I do, there must be no half-measures, I thank you;—as I have sworn to act, you—my self-elected agent—and my son—must act."

"Have no doubt, or fear of me!"

"Nay—I will not relinquish my sacred right, unless you swear—that he dies!—Ay—and unless you swear it upon this blessed book, in which we all believe;"—and he took from his bosom the volume of which he spoke, and handed it impressively, to George.

"And I swear!"—responded the wretched youth, hastily catching it up, and pressing it to his fevered lips.

"Still attend to me for a moment, then. With the ruffian whom you have just seen here, I had arranged my manner of admission into Connor Kennedy's house; and since you will represent me, I must explain it to you:—the fellow knows not, indeed, my intention in visiting his master's

premises; but no matter about that; listen to me, I say, and observe me well—three knocks at the hall-door; and thus—thus—and thus—" and the speaker, with the back knuckles of his hand, accompanied each "thus," with a stroke upon the hollow wainstcoting of the room, which produced a sound that curdled, while it still maddened, the young man's blood.

"Yes! yes! and now the pistols—give me both."

"One will be sufficient! I have prepared them with my own hands, and can assure you, therefore, that either one or the other may be depended upon."

"I require both, I say!—Ay—now I am properly armed;—fare you well;—you are the father of a wretched, wretched son—the blighted stem of a blighted scion! But let me take your hand —Fare you well—you shall be revenged—Yes! —along with *her*, and with me, you shall be revenged!"

The boy desperately grasped the hand which was bluffly extended to him;—his hot red eye shed no tear over the separation which he doomed should be final;—and then, hiding the pistols in a hurried manner, he rushed bare-headed and panting, into the street.

And Harry Stokesbury, while returning his parting salutation, as he looked intently and stu-

diously into the expression of that eye, became satisfied that he had wrought upon the lad sufficiently to ensure the dreadful consummation after which he had long thirsted and ravened.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE same evening, the Mayor of Wind-gap, with Shawn Leeach, and Gregory Roche, were seated together in regular council.

His worship sat in the middle of his usual council-hall—namely, the earthen floored, but tidily arranged kitchen, of his thatched house, in his municipal wicker chair. The three had for some time been very serious, and still were so; exhibiting, in fact, the faces of gravity, and the decorous manners particularly characteristic of them, when engaged upon matters of great public importance.

Their conversation is taken up, at the moment most convenient for our purpose, and for the reader's leisure.

"You're very ould, Shawn Leeach; the winther's snow is heavy on your head; and yet your head is fast on your neck for all that, Shawn;

don't I spake a thruth?" demanded the Mayor, "very wisely."

"Mayor of Wind-gap, you do. Five-score-and-five-years, I have been on this earth—and that is a long age, praise to my Maker; and ould age brings the snowy head—spring comes to the fields, and to the threes, and the flowers of the fields, afther the winther; but there's no spring for the ould man; none in this world, at laste; if he hopes for that, his hope must be fixed in heaven. Yes—Mayor of Wind-gap, I am very ould, as you say, but my ould head is still on my shouldhers."

"Well, Shawn; as thrue as *that* is thrue, and I repeat it over again, to ye both—Harry Stokesbury that was, and the sthrange man now living at the Inch house, makes only one man between them."

"The death of a happy Christhin be my lot, Mayor of Wind-gap, but that is news to make people wondher," observed Shawn Leeach.

"Och! well did I know him, when he was in his youth," remarked Gregory Roche—"but though my eyes—I give glory for the same—are as good to see with, now, as the day I got them, never would they find out the ruddy-cheeked and the handsome Harry Stokesbury, in that dark, wicked-looking man, that stood in the light of the bonfire last St. John's eve."

"And for all that, Gregory," resumed Maurteen

Maher, "and you may take my word for it, I say to you over again—the man that you saw standin' in the light of the fire, that night, was the same Harry Stokesbury you knew in his young days."

"It is seldom I knew you to be far asthray, Mayor of Wind-gap, an' so it's asy for me to give you my b'lief in what you say, at present. It was not for having a stupid head the neighbours made you Mayor over them; only, I'm thinkin', ye had some help, besides your own eyes, in making out a likeness between Harry Stokesbury, and the sthrange man of the Inch."

"And you, yourself, spakes now like a man that had his wits to the good, Gregory Roche," replied the Mayor. "Yes! by my own honest thruth, it would be a keen eye would know the young sapling of former days, out of the present ould oak of the Inch;—and so I *had* help' along with my own eyes, Gregory;—and I am goin' to tell you all about it—you and Shawn Leeach, together; and mind ye, both, now ye are sittin' here, at the one side and the other o' me, that we may all hould a thrue council; and ye may know all that I know; and that I may have your advice on the head of the whole of it; because we'll have to put our shouldhers to the business, in regular coorse."

"We'll each do our endavour, plaze the Lord!" said Shawn Leeach, solemnly.

"And ye know, moreover, that 'tis our ould way, that what we spake to each other, when we sit in

council, must not go from mouth to ear; for if 'twas a thing that we shared our knowledge among all the world, mostha! there wouldn't be half money's worth in it; when apples are bending the boughs in every orchard, sure they are not bought up half as greedy as when there is only two for a half-penny; and more be token, I wouldn't talk to men, wid an ould woman's gaddin' tongue; and ould women, we all know, must get nothing at all to tell, if you'd have the hearth swept."

"What you're sayin' shews the sense God gave ye," flattered Shawn Leeach.

"Mayor of Wind-gap," quoth Gregory Roche, more pithily, "a silent tongue doesn't shame the owner; and sure, if every one was as wise as ourselves, there would be a mayor in every house on Wind-gap hill; and then we might go wid our judgments out o' the place; and lave nothin' behind us but constructions, and law,—instead of bein' good neighbours to each other, undher God —and us."

"'Tis plain," resumed Maurteen, "that ye are both the sort I took you for, when I made ye my council: and so, I'll be open-hearted wid ye. Ye want to learn how I found out that the sthrange man of the Inch was Harry Stokesbury. Well. Have ye the memory of a poor *colleen*, a sisther o' mine, that lived among us, and was merry among us, twenty years ago?"

"It's right well I bring her to my mind—poor Kate Maher!" answered Shawn Leeach.

"And 'tis, have *I* the memory of her you want to know, Mayor of Wind-gap?" asked Gregory Roche; "achone! and it's sure that I have. Kate Maher was worthy for a prence to look upon: tall an' comely, she was, in her shapes; an' her cheek plump, an' smooth, an' red, like the bloom on the apple; an' her eyes was the blue sky of a May mornin'; and her hair was the shinin' goold; *arrah*, yes; there wasn't your fellow, Kate Maher, on the hill o' Wind-gap."

"It's often, before now, her own ears heard your flattering speeches of her, Gregory Roche; and well would it have been for her, twenty years ago, if she gave heed to them, only half as often as she heard them. Well. The neighbours never knew what happened to Kate Maher, or why she went away from us; and in thruth, ye are both going to hear her story, for the first time that it ever came out of my lips.

"Young Harry Stokesbury took our poor Kate's heart; and, to my sore sorrow, she wasn't honester for knowin' him; and when he was sent across the says, she went into the same ship with Harry Stokesbury, in a sailor boy's dhress, all for the love of him; yes, Mayor's council; she left kith and kin, hearth-stone, and home counthry, for his sinful sake."

"Well, neighbours; the ship was smashed into little bits—just as a body would break a nut-shell

—upon the rocky shores of a sthrange counthry, a great way off from Wind-gap. And Harry Stokesbury was the only mankind that lived out of the wrack; all the rest of the men that were in the ship—and a fine, great, big ship it was—sunk to the bottom o' the say, and its wathers roared over them. And my poor Kate was the only woman-kind saved at the same time; and it was Harry Stokesbury that saved her; and many others, may be, man and woman, he might have thried to save, for as ye all know, he was the best swimmer we ever seen, on breast or back, in the river that runs undher our feet; stay out in it, he used to do, like one of its own fishes—only that he just kept his chin above the wather—for hours together; and then dart back to the bank where he left his clothes, and jump up on it, as if he had been only takin' a little walk in my little garden, where I keep the osiers growing, for my basket thrade, and sometimes for my chair thrade.

"And so, he only saved but the one; and that one was the poor creature that left her counthry for him; my poor, misfortunate, and only sisther, Kate Maher. And long did he fight wid the terrible waves o' the angry say, and he would not go from death, without her; until, at last, his feet touched the shores o' the sthrange counthry, and she, senseless, in his arums.

"From that time to the present time, the most befitting thing for me to say is that poor Kate Maher never left the man that wouldn't care about

his own life, until he had saved hers; though it grieves me sore to tell ye that many, and many, a time, since that day, she got good cause to quit him.

"Avoch, neighbours! Ye have heard every body talkin' of an unfortunate ould woman, that keeps house for him at the Inch; and sore it goes against my heart to say that that woman—withered before her time—though, as ye both know, not yet as ould as the people call her—is my poor sisther. And so, now ye can give a guess how I got my knowledge of who the sthrange man is, and more be token, of some of his doin's since he came to live near us, for the second time in his life."

"'Tis mighty wondherful to harken to the words o' your mouth; mighty wondherful, in good thruth, Maurteen Maher," said old Shawn Leeach, sitting more upright, and looking more vivacious, than for many years had been his expression. Tears were in his eyes, too.

"Achone! its often I sarched out tidin's o' my poor Kate, afore this blessed hour," groaned Gregory Roche;—bud you held the silent tongue, Mayor o' Wind-gap;—and its heart-sorry for her I am this day;—Och!—if she had only lived among us 'till the prasant time, in the wholesome air that comes up here from the river, she would have no wrinkle in her face—for my poor Kate Maher is not yet an ould woman."

"No, Gregory, as I tould you afore;—but a sthrange course o' life, and a life o' sin and hard-

ship, and the airly thoughts of her youth—for she was bred up to love and sarve God—stalin' like the blight of the unwholesome wind upon her—made Kate Maher what she is, before her time;—yes;—made her comb a gray head, afore another girl of her years would have a white hair in it, to tell of the comin' winther;—so that her cheek was shrivelled up by the wo of her sperrit;—Och! neighbours, neighbours, she has tould me herself not to wondher at the wrinkles of her face; for that the constant cryin' from her eyes would wear channels into the hardest marble;"—the voice of the stoical Mayor of Wind-gap trembled;—nor were his council uninfected by his feelings.

"The Lord forgive her, and bring her to a thrue sinse of her sins," said old Shawn Leeach.

"The Lord pity her, and be her comfort," ejaculated the more sympathizing Gregory Roche.

"Neighbours, I am afther telling ye what I would not tell, and what I never will tell to another livin' crature. Our poor Kate must now go to her grave without the world's knowledge that she is alive here among us. All I can now thry to do for my sisther, is to take her quietly away from the man that has made her what she is;—that's one o' the things I want your help in. And so listen.—We must do our endayvours to get her free with Harry Stokesbury's own good will;—for if he had a notion that she tould the

secrets of her life, her death-doom was given. And I intend, neighbours, to get something for her to live on, while she is on this earth, repenting of her sins, and prayin' for mercy;—and I have the plan in my mind how to do this, ay, and another thing at the same time, if the Lord gives us his help."

"It will be a work of charity, and He will assist us," said Shawn Leeach.

"In Him we put our thrust.—Well, neighbours, I have more to tell ye.

"The name of the country isn't in my mind where Harry Stokesbury brought Kate Maher out of the say;—but there is people far away from us that never earn an honest mouthful of food, from the beginning of the year to the year's ending.—And they have ships;—and they sail out in them upon the say;—and they meet other ships full of marchandizes of all sorts and loaded with chests of money;—and they fight with those ships;—and they conquer them;—and they shed the blood of the Christhens they find in them;—and they make their own of all the riches;—and there is nothing terrible that these robbers of the say don't do.—And now, mind me well. It was among these wicked people that Harry Stokesbury landed out of the wrack with Kate Maher.—And Harry soon began to love and like their ways;—and as he was a bould and a brave man, he soon made himself captain of a robbin' ship. And then poor Kate was soon overlooked by him;

—he took up with fine ladies;—and she was *only* his sarvant: but still she worked with a good heart for the man she loved dearly, and that saved her, at the risk of his own life, from a winding-sheet o' the salt say-wather—neighbours, she did."

"The Lord look down upon us, and purtect us!" prayed Gregory Roche, in consternation.

"Ye have the knowledge, Mayor's council, of what Harry Stokesbury did, that brought banishment upon him; but there is more to be said on that score;—and only three people in the world can tell ye what the more is;—and I am one of the three.

"A little while before Connor Kennedy lost his wife, she brought a male child into the world;—and she was not well of her lying-in, when her husband was half-killed at her bed-side—and 'twas that sent herself to her arly grave—Connor Kennedy and she did not wish that any one should be the wiser of her marriage;—they were afraid of Harry Stokesbury;—and they thought to hide it, in hopes of getting his good will, before any one could tell him of it;—and, for that rason, they sent away the child as soon as it saw the light. And that child was forced off from its nurse, and no one can tell of the fate of the crature, to this day, barrin' the three people I spoke to ye of before;—but, neighbours, the child was sazed on by Harry Stokesbury;—and it is a man at the prasent time, alive; and more be token, a comely gorsoon to look upon;

an' the two o' ye that I'm talkin' to have often seen him, face to face, an' are mightily plazed wid his looks;—and more than once, I heard Gregory Roche say,"—here Gregory started and looked confounded—"that he was as brave a boy as ever he liked to see, comin' up from the town below, to Wind-gap Hill;—Gregory Roche, don't I spake the thruth to ye?—answer me like a Christhin."

"The heavens be my bed," answered Gregory Roche, making the sign of the cross on his forehead—"if I can call to mind who or what you mane at all, Mayor of Wind-gap."

"I'm five-score years, and some more years on the back of them, living on Wind-gap Hill, where sthrange people goes to and fro and sthrange things are hard of; but the likes o' this never came across me before," said Shawn Leeach.

"You might thravel a long summer's day, Shawn, and you would not find one to know what the Mayhor knows," adulated Gregory Roche.

"And I know more, still, neighbours;—I know Connor Kennedy's boy—ay—I know him, to spake to him;—and I know where he is while we are discoursen' about him;"—and the Mayor paused, as if waiting for a new flattering comment; but his two old counsellors were too intent with their ears to use their tongues;—he was, therefore, obliged to go on.

"Shawn Leeach, and Gregory Roche—as sure as ye are both sittin' here, this is the thruth;—

Connor Kennedy's son goes by the name of George Blundell."

"Why, the Lord be good to us!—And isn't id thrue, at the same time, then, that the father has the son in jail, and that he'll hang him on the gallows-hill, over there?"—and Gregory pointed to a sudden conical elevation of ground on the opposite side of the river, then the honoured place of execution.—"An' if Connor Kennedy is that boy's father, didn't the son break into the father's house, and take away his own sisther!—For you know, Mayor of Wind-gap, the people say that the young girl livin' with Connor Kennedy is his daughther; —and then, won't the brother have to answer for the sisther's shame?—And won't the father have to answer for the death o' the son?"

"I tould ye, Mayor's council, that the first thing you're to give your advice in is the freein' of the unfortunate Kate Maher from Harry Stokesbury, with his own free will;—and now I tell ye that the other thing ye have to do is to give your counsel how we are to keep the father from hangin' of his own son."

"Mayor of Wind-gap," said Shawn Leeach, impressively, "won't you go to Connor Kennedy and tell him his son is livin'; and that the boy in the jail is that son?—won't you, this moment?"

"And if I did, Shawn, Connor Kennedy would have only my word for the thruth o' the sayin'; and, on account of all we have to do, that would

never be enough. There is only the one man on the face o' the arth can prove—prove it, I mane, beyond all doubt—that George Blundell is Connor Kennedy's son——and that man is Harry Stokesbury."

"And, Mayor o' Wind-gap," demanded Gregory Roche, imploringly,—"Has the brother to stand afore the judgment-sate, to give an account o' the poor young sisther?"

"Gregory Roche, I am goin' to make answer to you, in a way that will put the wondher on you, more than any word ye have yet hard me spake. —The brother had nothing to do with takin' away the sisther; but the father had all to do with takin' away the daughther."

"Ulla-loo! ejaculated Gregory, "one sayin' o' yours bates the other, out-an'-out will you make known to me this, then?—Didn't Connor Kennedy put the boy in jail for doin' what he never done, but what the wicked father o' the young *colleen* made to come to pass with his own hands?"

"Mind me, again, Gregory. The wicked father o' the young *colleen* took her away, of a sartainty; but not Connor Kennedy;—*he* had no more to do with it than poor young George Blundell had."

And, interrupting his council in expressions of a climax of their astonishment, Maurteen Maher added—"and it was Harry Stokesbury forced her away;—and as sure as George Blundell is Connor

Kennedy's son, Anny Kennedy is Harry Stokesbury's daughter!"

Here the feelings of the listeners became too deep for any thing but vague mutterings; till at length Shawn Leeach asked—"*Chrossa-Christha* about us!—and did the wicked villain o' the arth know who was in his hands, the night he took Anny Kennedy from her home?"

"No, Shawn; no more than Gregory Roche knew it; and I b'lieve Gregory won't purtend to much knowledge on the matther. But, listen to me, still, neighbours, and thry if I can't give ye some insight.

"From the day and hour that Harry Stokesbury was banished from his counthry, up to this blessed moment, he never forgave Connor Kennedy; and 'tis my thought of him, that he'd turn the world inside-out—ay, sell himself, sowl and body, to some one we won't make mention of—to do his cousin an evil; and so, thinkin' like yourself and the rest o' the people, Gregory, that Anny Kennedy was his daughther, wicked Harry ran off with her, to spite the man he thought was her father."

"Oh, *beeha baugha*,* Mayor of Wind-gap!" cried Shawn Leeach, his snowy head shaking to extremity—"and did the misfortunate man bring the disgrace on his own child? Achone! did that come to pass so near to Wind-gap hill?"

* Virgin Mother.

"No, Shawn Leeach; he learned who she was in time:" answered the Mayor consequentially, and to a nice observer egotistically.

"Then, may the heavens be blest, this night! for if such a thing had happened, wouldn't it be enough to bring down upon the earth the angry fire from Heaven, and to make the innocent suffer with the guilty?"

"Who was the blessed Christhen that sthretched out his hand, in time?" demanded Gregory Roche, see-sawing his body in deep sympathy.

"It was myself that was able, undher the Lord's mercy, to do the good deed, Gregory."

"Och! the blessin's light upon you! an' I wouldn't doubt you, Mayor o' Wind-gap."

"Well, neighbours. But there is one thing that I am asthray upon. By help o' the poor Kate Maher, I was able to dive to the bottom of a great many of Harry Stokesbury's doins'; but 'tis beyand her knowing, and, by coorse, beyand my knowing, what he has in his head, by conthrivin' to make the father, Connor Kennedy, put the son, George Blundell, in jail. For, ye must know, it was Harry Stokesbury that got Donnelly to swear against the poor young boy; Donnelly—the greatest rapparee unhanged this night; he'd rob the althar for money; and it was threachery that he was put into Connor Kennedy's house."

"And so, Maurteen Maher, we are to give you our counsel upon the point, why the wicked man

o' the Inch has got Connor Kennedy to let George Blandell be sent to the common jail?"

"Yes; and, first, here is my own notion about it. As I tould ye afore, Stokesbery 'ud go to the thrashold o' the bottomless pit, if not farther, to have one good, heavy blow at Connor Kennedy; and I was thinkin' in my own mind, that to make his cousin's ould age come on before its time, and to send him despairing to the grave, he wants—since he has found out that Anny Kennedy is not Connor's child, and that he cannot for the same rason, wrake his hathred upon her—he wants, I say, to make the father an insthrument in takin' away the son's life; and then he'll come to Kennedy, and say to him—'Look now, at that sthrangled corpse—and look at it well—for 'tis the corpse o' your own boy! And, in this manner, cousin Kennedy, I have a little revenge on you; in this manner I pay you part of what I have owed you these twenty long years, for robbing me of my fortune, of my father's love, and of my betrothed wife!'"

The Mayor's council shuddered, and prayed that all good Christians might be kept out of the power of a man capable of such unimaginable villany.

"Shawn Leeach, and Gregory Roche, this work of darkness we must gainsay, if Heaven vouchsafes to give us the wisdom, and the patience, and the manes to do it."

Solemnly, and with zealous protestations, his

worship's compeers expressed their anxiety to aid and abet him to the utmost of their ability; "And," added Shawn Leeach, "our humble prayers will help you, too, morning and evening, Maurteen Maher."

"And I will go on my knees, and pray, too," continued the Mayor; "but," and his manner became impressive and alarming—"still I have a fear that we must fail in our endeavours. And, first, the fear came from my being in the dark, as to Stokesbury's raal intentions in regard o' the young George; and now I have the fear that we are to fail, by rason o' the doom that is on the poor boy. A thought comes heavy and black into my mind, that death is afore him, and that he must face it. Shawn Leeach, give me the words of your age, upon what I will ask you. When the first son of a marriage comes into the world on a Whit-sunday mornin', afore the day dawns in the sky—isn't there a doom upon that son?"

Daddy Leeach answered, in all the slow sententiousness of oracular exposition, his eyes solemnly fixed on the ground:

"Mayor of Wind-gap, there is a doom, a woful doom upon the first son of a marriage that is born of a Whit-sunday mornin' afore the day breaks, to give him a welcome. During my stay in this wicked world, the doom came to pass three times, to my own certain knowledge."

"And ochone, ochone! what is the doom, Shawn Leeach?" asked Gregory Roche.

"This is the doom, Gregory. When that son comes to his twenty-first year, he will kill a fellow-creature, or some fellow-creature's hand will kill him; ay, surely, surely; blood he is to shed, or else his own must be shed."

"Then, Shawn Leeach, I tell you, that Gerald Kennedy, for that is the name he got at his christinin', the first son, afther his parent's marriage, was born into the world of a Whit-sunday morning, afore the dawn broke up the clouds o' the night; and, moreover, that his twenty-first year is on his young head."

"The Lord have a care of him, since such is his case!" prayed Daddy Leeach.

"Och, an amin," said Gregory; "and Mayor o' Wind-gap, won't it, oh, won't it be a frightful thing, if his own father's hand is to bring down the doom on young George Blundell? Isn't it in your power to save him? or in the power of us all, or of any one?"

"Gregory Roche, I have the dhread that 'tis out of our power to save him; we want to go to work in a very conthrary business, and, as yet we do not see a stim of our way afore us. I tould ye, awhile ago, that 'twould be of no use for me to go to Connor Kennedy, and tell who George Blundell is; without proofs, and good ones, too, he would laugh at ould Maurteen Maher, and no blame to him. I said to ye, at the same time,

that Harry Stokesbury is the only livin' man who can give us the kind of proof we want; but how we are to make him do that, is the question. And yet along with getting poor Kate Maher out of his divel's clutches, of his own free will, with freedom for her to end her days in her own counthry, repenting of her sins—we must conthrive to make him do it, neighbours; or, if we don't, no other three heads on Wind-gap hill, not to talk o' the town below, will carry the point. But, now, Mayor's council, let us each go to bed, and sleep on it. To-morrow may bring us wisdom."

CHAPTER XIX.

It is not, we hope, forgotten that the council held by the wise men of Wind-gap took place on the evening when George Blundell, or, more properly, Gerald Kennedy, escaped from prison, and conferred with Harry Stokesbury. It now farther appears that Maurteen Maher's sagacity was at fault as to Stokesbury's designs upon the youth; that, in fact, his little birdeen, in other words, his sister, had failed to fathom the desperate man's present purpose; nay, it is also apparent that, about the time when the three sages, puzzled by the business in hand, agreed to "sleep on it," in the hope of getting up more enlightened the next morning, Gerald Kennedy had already set out on his road to the destruction from which they were anxious to save him;—to the accomplishment of that doom, indeed, predicated by Daddy Leeach for a man in his twenty-first year,

and unfortunately born under the peculiar circumstances which attended Gerald's birth.

Stokesbury, upon the lad's sudden and agitated departure from the house in which they held their last conversation, prepared to follow him, to dog his steps, and keep an eye upon his motions and actions. But it happened to become most necessary for him to hold in his possession before he and Gerald should again meet, the proofs of his young victim's parentage; and to get at these he was obliged to visit the house at the Inch; and thus some time unavoidably elapsed, ere he could proceed to ascertain the result of his diabolical scheme of vengeance.

At length he stood at the door of Connor Kennedy's dwelling. He listened. All seemed still and peaceable within.

"Has his heart failed him, and has he not come hither at all? or has he *done* it, and have they again lodged him in their jail? or has he used the second pistol, and does the roof of this silent house cover two corpses,—one of them his own? In this manner did Harry Stokesbury commune with himself for a few moments.

Then he gave three low knocks at the door, and again listened. No one replied to his signal. He repeated it. The door still remained closed. Muttering curses against Donnelly for his lack of attention, he knocked louder and more boldly. Suddenly he started, and his figure became rigid-

ly fixed in a position of deep and stern attention. The sharp report of a pistol-shot was heard within, reverberating to a double compass, as it rang through the apartments of the house.

"There he *has* used *one* of the pistols, at least," pursued the listener.

The door was suddenly pulled open; old Joseph Fitzgerald was rushing past him into the dark and silent street.

"Stop!" cried Stokesbury, "what is the meaning of that shot in your house?"

"Oh, sir! whoever you are," answered the servant, "for heaven's sake, give Christhen help to secure the man that has murthered my masther in his sleep!"

"Murdered your master! and is the murderer known to you?"

"Yes, yes, sir! a young man that escaped from the common jail this evening; his name is George Blundell."

"Ay, indeed? lead the way, then, I will secure him for you."

The white-headed servant preceded his supposed assistant up stairs, and into the drawing-room. A single chamber-light flickered upon the table, and Gerald Kennedy was seated close to it, his elbow resting on the table, and his forehead pressing on his hand. There was one pistol lying near the candle, and another in the hand that hung at length by his chair.

"There is the murtherer," said Joseph Fitzge-

rald; and then, turning his regard on Stokesbury, he started back, when, in his person he recognised the strange man of the Inch, and was about to retire from the room, muttering inaudibly.

"Stand your ground, man; I require your presence," said Stokesbury, intercepting him, locking the door, and putting the key in his pocket.

The bravo next advanced slowly to Gerald Kennedy, laid his hand on his shoulder, and shook him quietly.

The youth raised his head, and looked into his friend's face.

"Well?" asked Stokesbury.

Gerald Kennedy made no answer.

"That shot?" continued Stokesbury; "the old servant tells me it was you who fired it."

"He tells you the fact," at last, replied Gerald, in a low, hoarse whisper.

"And from this pistol it was discharged?" pursued the strange man of the Inch, taking up that which lay on the table, near the young man's elbow.

"Yes; from that pistol the shot was discharged."

Stokesbury studiously examined the weapon, with a view to ascertain if it had been recently exploded, and soon seemed satisfied of the fact. Gerald saw him smile.

"You did not want the second?" he asked.

"No: I had, indeed, intended this one in my hand for another purpose; but I change my mind now;—the courageous midnight murderer should

abide the consequences of his act;"—and Gerald Kennedy flung far from him the pistol he had hitherto held in his right hand.

Stokesbury reapproached the old servant, and spoke to him in a low tone.

"He was asleep, I think you said, when this young ruffian murdered him?"

"Asleep in his bed," answered Joseph Fitzgerald; "my poor master got no time to pray for mercy on his soul."

"So, so—but are you sure there are no hopes of him? Are you sure he is dead, quite dead?"

"Oh! to my sorrow I am;—dead, dead he is; ay, and could, could, by this time."

"Let me see the body."

"I will, sir;" but won't you first make sure o' the prisoner for us?"

"Ha, you are right; yes: before any thing else, I have to bring him to an account."

So saying, Harry Stokesbury again came close to Gerald Kennedy.

"Young man," he demanded, "don't you feel quieter now? quieter, I mean, than when we last spake together?"

"Tell me what you really mean," said Gerald.

"Why, you know you have killed him; and are you not, therefore, satisfied?"

"And are not you, as well as I?"

"Listen to me. I am going to tell you something. If you happen to feel really concerned for the little act you have committed, I can comfort

you. It was out of your power to have avoided something of the kind, even if you would have done so; you have but fulfilled a fate assigned to you, at your birth; before it, for aught I know."

Gerald Kennedy here stood up, and gazed steadfastly at his tormentor.

"I do not understand you," he said.

"Why, boy, the case is even thus: while you were but an infant, a small mass of creeping flesh, more helpless and more contemptible than the worm; in fact, when you were but a few days old, I was wisely informed that, because you happened to be whelped upon a particular day, the which day, as it seemeth good to Providence, is to prove a curse to all male brats born within a certain number of its hours;—for this reason, I say, I was sagely, credibly told, that you had been doomed, upon attaining your twenty-first year, either to shed blood, or to have your own blood shed. Therefore, my lad, do not blame yourself for what you have done to-night; blame your stars, rather, which allowed you to be introduced among us, in this world, at a forbidden moment."

"There is something in your mode of speech, and in your accents, and in your look, at present, that chills me," said Gerald Kennedy; "it seems as if you would now sneer at me for doing that which you certainly set me on to do."

"Not at all, not at all; you only mistake. I merely want to reconcile you to yourself. For is it not quite plain to you, that, when the doing of

a murder, when the sluicing of human blood, had been assigned to you, by fate, or by whatever else you choose to call your Lord high Admiral aloft, you could not possibly do otherwise than obey orders and work ship? Well, this being allowed, I now have to demand your thanks for having set you on, as you say. Remember, I had a good look-out for your personal safety, boy, after you should have fulfilled your doom by blowing out the brains of the man we used to call Mr. Connor Kennedy: this very night, in fact, if you and I continue of a mind, I can snatch you, as I before hinted, out of all reach of their bother, on the head of what you have done; and surely you now comprehend why you should thank me, do you not?"

Gerald replied, with some reason, that he did not, even yet, distinctly understand.

"Look you, then, had I left you to take your own chance, in working out that terrible doom that was upon you, ten to one, but yours might have been the life lost, instead of another man's; ten to one, again, but the odds might have been against you, in an encounter with a different kind of person. In Mr. Connor Kennedy I took care, however, to provide for you a man whom you could kill, without much danger of being killed by him; and, then, as to the time and circumstances of the murder, you are still fortunate; the poor man was asleep;—his head resting comfortably upon his pillow, when you put one of my

little pistols to it;—weak as was the worm, he might have turned upon you, had he been awake, you know;—and does all this show no fatherly care of you, boy?"

"It is popularly credited," said Gerald Kennedy, "that your human shape is but an outward semblance, and that a devil of darkness possesses, animates, and governs it, and I am now inclined to adopt that belief; for ever thus, it is said, does the enemy of man, with wily wisdom, lead his dupe into crime, and then mocks at the wretch for having fallen."

"What! give me hard words, only for my watchfulness over your precious life? out upon you, for an ungrateful boy; yes, ungrateful you are; and there is but one other sin more heinous than ingratitude, and that one is murder; cool murder, I mean; stealthy, cowardly, midnight murder!"

"Oh! how terrible is all this!" exclaimed Gerald.

"The last time you and I laid our heads together, I told you, that when I had left Connor Kennedy trampled down on my own hearth-stone, I thought my full revenge was wreaked upon him, but that he, even in this, deceived me; nay, more, that instead of ensuring my own triumphant vengeance that night, the villain was still able to wreathe his coils closer and closer around me,—was still able to crush and sting, till he made the remainder of my life but one long, writhing fit of shame.

and degradation. Well, you, good youth, had previously been placed by me, as an infant, where I could find you when I had leisure;—find you, to bring you up for any purpose, which, on reflection, should appear best to me. Well, I say, after the sentence which sent me, branded like Cain, into a strange country, I felt, whenever the recollection of your existence occurred to me, that a revenge, at last, by my own hand, upon the author of all my ruin, would not, whenever I might be able to achieve it, be half enough;—but that your hand, ay, yours only, must, from that moment, be appointed and directed to right me.—And such, at last, turns out to be the case;—and,-at last, I *am* righted."

"It was a fell and baleful idea and plan," said Gerald; "and why should I,—I, your son, have been selected for effecting it? And how can my hand have avenged you better than your own could have done?"

"My son!—but I will answer you in my own way, and yet quite to your satisfaction, I have no doubt. Hearken to me. I have been, and I am, a bold and courageous man. With my single arm often have I overpowered heavy odds; but that was in fair fighting, always excepting my wish to trample, to buffet, ay, to kick to death, the dastard Connor Kennedy, never have I taken a life in cold blood;—never have I thought of so taking one. *My* enemies were met front to front, and battle roared around us, I pushed my full breast

against them; we encountered on the compact of the valiant; 'Search for my heart with your sword, if your arm be stronger, or your blow surer, than mine!' No! the poor dog that crouched and crawled for mercy, never could I smite; but I have ever left him, mark you, to be dealt upon by meaner hands than my own! and in proportion to my manly disgust of a mean assassination, are my dislike and contempt of the mean assassin. Yes, the skulking, cowardly, midnight murderer I do detest;—with him I can hold no intercourse; and him I do repudiate; for in his base veins there could never have run a drop of the lion's blood that courses through mine!"

"Father, what mean you?"

"Father! reptile, spawn, poltroon, man-killer! you are, in truth, no son of mine. I lied to the teeth, when I said you were; but I lied boldly, and for my purpose, as I also did on sundry other points, with you. For instance, I told you that Kennedy had plotted against you, and then I lied: and that he had suborned Donnelly against you, and then I lied, too: and, listen to me with your soul, that he had seduced your Anny from you, and that he had injured her, and that, at last, he had married her; and again, and again, and again, and on, on to the end of the chapter, I lied, and lied, and lied. Why? ha ha! why? to madden you into the mood for doing what you have so nobly done! to make sure of your killing Connor Kennedy! to make

sure, quite sure, of his death by your hand!—by his own son's hand? Ay, at that you will gape at me; but, just as true as that you are no son of *mine*, it is true that you *are* the son of the man whose blood is upon you! and whose grovelling, traitor-blood gave life to your heart, fitly timing its pulses for such a good action; for, as I told you before, blood of mine could never have warmed you, or, rather, cooled your down to the perpetration of such a mean atrocity."

"Now, I do not believe you," said Gerald.

"Sirrah! not believe me?"

"No, I do not believe you; I am not Connor Kennedy's son: 'tis a fiendish fiction; 'tis an impossibility, an utter impossibility."

"And what, particularly, makes you so very incredulous?" sneered Stokesbury.

"Because I feel convinced that you, even you, devil as you are, never could conceive the thought of setting on the son to kill the father. You dare not; Heaven would not suffer you to do so. I say again, I do not believe you; I say again, I am not Connor Kennedy's son."

"You have spoken well, boy, passing well. There is pith in your words; and your view of right and wrong is very correct; yes, I do myself declare it is a black and ugly deed to murder a father! and yet that deed you have done."

"I have not; for *you* live; and you are my father; you have brought me up as your offspring;

you have given me the title of son, and that title I will uphold, even against yourself, before the world."

"Pish—I can easily disprove your title."

"And I dare you to that disproof!"

"Fool! and do you think I cannot make my words good?—Do you think me so very poor an artificer as that my patient work of nearly twenty years is likely to be blown down by a puff of your flimsy breath?—Silly cur!—I had anticipated your present attempt to palm yourself upon me, even before I entered this house to-night. And now, to begin my course of proof."

He took off the handkerchief which usually half-covered his face, and continued,

"Joseph Fitzgerald, old and faithful servant of my father's house,—do you recollect your former master?"

"Oh, sir, sir," answered the man, "great wondher comes upon me with your words,—I don't know what reply to make you!"

"Time has, doubtless, changed me; the weather has pelted on me, and the sun has scorched me; you see before you, however, the master you have long thought dead. Go for your wife, and lead her hither directly."

"My wife, you said, sir!" repeated Joseph, looking more and more frightened.

"Yes, man—your wife—did I not speak distinctly?—Tell her that Harry Stokesbury summons her to speak with him. Tell her to remem-

ber the evening when young Harry Stokesbury forced Connor Kennedy's brat from her arms; tell her to remember that he then warned her she should be called upon, at a future day to identify the traitor's bantling;—and tell her that the time is now come. Retire, I say, and lead your wife up to this room."

He opened the door, and the servant withdrew. He went on, to Gerald——

"Yes, son of Connor Kennedy, I will soon demonstrate to you who is, or rather who was your father, and, how full, and how true, has, therefore, been my revenge. In one point, alone, I have not quite satisfied myself.—Before the very last gasp left his body, he did not know who killed him; oh!—would that he could have known it! And, trust me, often and often have I pondered to try and arrange that he should be made acquainted with the relationship between him and his executioner. But it was impossible to compass it, without putting both of you on your guard. And when you lay in yonder jail, too, by my contrivance, another mode of vengeance on him slightly occurred to me. For a moment I thought it might be practicable to change my tactics; to get you tried, convicted, and excellently well hanged for the abduction of Anny Kennedy, making him a witness against you;—and then, after your popular exit from this world, I would have just whispered to him the story of your parentage.—But my chief witness, Donnelly,

I could not depend upon, at the push; he was what you call a person of bad character, and, besides, my man's servant, either in truth or in falsehood, for the heaviest bribe;—indeed, you have yourself heard him admit as much, a few hours ago. But no matter. Although Conner Kennedy could not, lest our plan might fail, get a hint in this world of who it was I doomed to take his life, yet, as very good people say there is another world, perhaps he knows it now;—and, indeed, for the especial consolation of my heart, never, before this hour have I felt half so inclined to be a firm believer on that knotty subject."

Joseph Fitzgerald reentered, conducting his wife, both agitated and trembling to excess.

"I am tould," began the woman, "there is one here who says he is the Masther Harry Stokesbury?"

"Come hither, dame.—You nursed for a few days Conner Kennedy's and Mary Bryan's first and only son?" The servant assented.

"You have received the message I sent to you this moment by your husband?—and you have understood it?—She again answered affirmatively.

"Well.. Examine these things attentively."—He took a small box from his bosom, opened it, and placed it on the table. "Have you seen them before? Are these the rags in which your own hands clothed Connor Kennedy's son, before you took him to nurse at your house? And do you find upon them the marks which I, Harry Stokes-

bury, directed you to put upon them, before I dragged your charge over your threshold?"

"Whether it comes to pass that you are Masther Harry Stokesbury or not," she replied, "these are the same clothes Connor Kennedy's son had on him, when Masther Henry Stokesbury took away the child from me."

"So;—and look at this, too; can you call this little thing to mind?" he continued.

"Oh! mercy be to me! It is the gospel I hung round the infant's neck, to save him from his evil doom," answered the woman.

"Yes!" scoffed Stokesbury, close into Gerald's face,—"and thus I learned the fable of your famous doom—the doom I have led you here to-night to accomplish, as I before told you—and learned it from this woman's lips, when by chance I asked the meaning of the silly amulet she had appended to your little carcass. Ha!—And you begin to admit my proofs, do you?—Yes; I see that horror is on your face;—I see that your cheek is livid; I see that a cold sweat trickles down your forehead, and that your limbs totter beneath you. But there is a stronger proof of the true nature of the cowardly murder you have just committed. Attend, sirrah; attend, closely. —Woman!" he went on aloud, and now imperiously and passionately, "you will recollect that I ordered you to notice a something on the arm of Connor Kennedy's whelp?"

"May the heavens save us!—and it is the same

voice I now hear that said the same words to me more than twenty years ago!"

"Right—the same voice, the very same. But did I not order to you to note that mark? And when you had done so, did you not call it a cherry-mark, caused, you would have me believe, from a cherry having been flung in play at his mother, before his birth? but no matter what you said—was there not a reddish spot of that kind on the young toad's arm?"

"I recollect every word you say, sir;—it is all as fresh to my mind as if it happened but yesterday."

"Examine your arm, then, Gerald Kennedy—and I call you at last by your true name;—I have, before now, allowed you to peer at *my* arm."

The unhappy young man suddenly sat down, as if from total incapacity to stand; placed his elbows on the table, and fully covered his face with his hands; and tears stole through his fingers, as, in a weak and broken voice, he said—"The mark is upon my arm."

"And my proof complete!" said Stokesbury; "and Connor Kennedy's murderer, *is* Connor Kennedy's son!—And that son knows as much!—Knows, too, that I set him on to kill his scoundrel parent—and why I did so!—Cur! you have named *me*—father—and the words came like the serpent's hiss into my ear; for, when you gave me that title, I called to mind that you were the offspring of my direst enemy—that you were of the loathed blood

of him who duped, abused, robbed, plundered, branded, banished me! and who had wiled Mary Bryan from my arms!—Oh! spume of the old reptile!—but that I cherished you as my avenger, I could have struck you to my foot, and spurned you, and spat upon you, when you dared so to address me—Ha! but no matter!—From Connor Kennedy's own slime has crawled the younger adder to sting him to the death!—from the tissue of his own infernal plottings have I woven the web of his ruin—insinuating into the middle of it the spider-spawn that was to clutch and strangle its bloated begetter!—Ha!—he taught me—he taught me!—Ay—and for this I brought you up, Gerald Kennedy! No one else, I say to you again, could have been my executioner upon your father!—root and branch he withered me,—and root and branch I have withered him!—True—I bear his brand upon my arm, and his curse still deeper branded into my heart!—true—I walk through the world, a mere black shadow of man, cast from an identity, a person of man, that I dare not name or avow. All that is true!——But something is done, now, to reconcile me to my lot!—that loathsome villain's son has shed his blood at my will!—and, branded as I am, that son shall be as brandied! The high gallows, to be sure, he may escape; for I suppose he will have friends in this little nook to back him! But even if he live, whenever he walks forth, the veriest heart-rotten wretches in existence, and the most virtuous people—the veriest sinners, and the

most innocent children—shall join in one cry against him—and that one cry shall be Parricide!"——

Gerald Kennedy, as if suddenly recovering his strength, sprung up from the position and attitude in which we have last described him; traces of tears still deep upon his cheek;—

"Dreadful man!" he said, "you have, indeed, drawn a terrific, and yet a true picture of the fate of a parricide; and, oh my God!" he continued, flinging himself upon his knees, straining his eyes, and stretching his arms upwards, while the tone of his voice was deep, fervent, and intense,—"Almighty Eye of the universe! behold before thee, an erring, and an humbled being! but accept, Omnipotent, the gratitude of a stricken, bursting heart, which gives thee praise and adoration, because that of parent's blood, or of the blood of any of Thy creatures, I am guiltless—guiltless—guiltless!"

"What say you, worm,—guiltless?" cried Stokesbury, starting back.

Gerald Kennedy again stood firmly on his feet, and his person erected itself to the full of its lofty height; and now a flush of exultation overspread his face, and his eye flashed a calm defiance, as with energy and grace he continued:

"Yes, guiltless of all taint of blood, I am; and not only guiltless of my father's blood, but standing here my father's protector against the universe! These arms to defend him, and this body as a tower

of strength between him and myriads. No, no; I care not if his enemy be man, or devil—his son is able to shield him from all harm."

He paused a moment, a little exhausted; and Harry Stokesbury only devoured him with his eye, but did not answer him.

"Stokesbury—Stokesbury,—you have shown but a slight knowledge of human nature. Stokesbury, although double my age, you have shown only that. Do you think, young and strong, as I am, I could have submitted so long to your taunts, had not my bosom's innocence supported me against them? Had I really been the murderer of my father, to my own conviction, do you suppose I could have so tamely listened to your reproaches, in consequence of the act? Tush! no! I listened to you merely because I had an object to attain from your vehemence; an object, the dearest that interests my present existence. Ay—Stokesbury—under competent instructions I wanted to gain from you—the only man who could supply it—proof, full proof, that I had not the misfortune to be your son. And, sir, you are quite right in an observation you made a little while ago—you saw me pale, and weak, and horrified, when you named all the proofs which made me Connor Kennedy's son, supposing me to be his murderer. But again you mistook—you interpreted into the outward show of a guilty conscience, what were only the workings of an affrighted and an abstracted soul. Yes—my cheek was livid, and the damp was upon

my brow; but these signs came simply because I was smitten to my very heart as you carefully presented before me the protraiture of the hideous crime to which you had provoked me, and of which I felt I might possibly have been guilty. Yes, Stokesbury, the mere idea that I had been on the road to become a parricide, made cold the very marrow in my bones—cold—cold—as the northern ice. Stokesbury—when I rushed from your presence, out of the house, to which you last brought me, the spirit you had put into me, and the spirit you had sent with me, did not accompany me far. There was a mild coolness in the breeze of the night, which as it flitted against my burning brow and breast, wafted to me an exorcising human feeling. Such a feeling as could not commit a murder.—I paused.—I looked towards the heavens,—the deep-blue sky was thickly strewn with its sparklings of Infinity! and some glorious stars were pre-eminently large, and bright, and pure; and I suddenly thought they might have been some of the many strong eyes of the great God—which we know, are always above us, and around us, looking down, not angrily, but oh! how much more chidingly than if angry, upon my hellish purpose! And with the thought of Him, Stokesbury, with the suddenly unfolded, and re-expanded idea of Him, His grace showered upon my heart; and I fancied that the stars I had been looking at arranged themselves into the words of some nightly language inscribing across the ex-

panse of the whole firmament—"Thou shalt do no murder!"—and I seemed to feel that the bland and odorous breeze became instinct and articulate, and like the whisper of a child—angels syllabled the same command into my ear! And then, Stokesbury, (and at last I call upon you, in my turn, to listen, for *you* have often called upon *me* this evening to listen to you)—then, Harry Stokesbury, tears burst from my scorching eyes—ay, in torrents did they burst, and I was not, and I am not ashamed of them; and, my knees, of their own accord, sunk under me, and I could pray. And, after having prayed, I could reflect! and the black cloud that you had hung over my soul rolled away from it, like the morning mist from the obscured mountain; and, oh—then—then—came the conviction of the enormity of the horrible deed I had left you to perpetrate! And I firmly resolved not only to shed no blood of the man whom you said had injured me, but I also resolved—because I feared you, Stokesbury—to hinder you, from shedding his blood by your own hand, or by any other hand, or means—and after this resolution I was calm enough to proceed to the bed-side of a friend, although an humble one, who, before I knocked at his door, had resigned himself to the *quiet* of sleep, and a good conscience; and he did not prove lukewarm to my summons, or my necessity; and, in fact, we spoke at length together; and, by his advice, I came here to meet you as I have met you."

"And pray, who is this sage?" demanded Stokesbury;—"and where is he now?"

"I am very glad to tell you he is *there*," answered Gerald, pointing to a large folding screen, at one side of the extensive old-fashioned chamber; and as Harry Stokesbury turned his scowling, inquisitive eyes, in that direction, they rested upon the spare features of the Mayor of Windgap, who, with his osier-wand of office, in his right hand, sedately advanced: immediately followed by a very aged white-headed man, who came forward, leaning on his polished staff, to take his station at the Mayor's right hand; and by a younger personage, who with many obeisances, also assumed his station at the Mayor's left hand. And in this order, the three at last stood still, full to the chin of the important business in which they were called on to interfere, and pronounce their judgment.

CHAPTER XX.

On board his fast-scudding ship, Stokesbury's rough-and-ready crew thought little of the boisterousness of their commander, which used to flare out and betray itself in violent words and actions, on trivial occasions. But when he paced *his quarter-deck*, up and down, taking no notice of them, or of any thing around him; uttering not a word; and his brow half-hiding his inward-turned eye, and his arms folded hard into each other; when thus they beheld him, the scoundrels would look to their weapons—well knowing from experience that a desperate business was to be engaged in, of the nature of which, however, they were to learn nothing until the moment should arrive for taking it in hand.

And such now was the expression of his knotted brow, and such was his calm unexcited austerity of manner.

He and Maurteen Maher eyed each other for a moment. His worship spake first.

"Yes, masther Harry Stokesbury, it's tee-totally of my conthrivance; the poor boy came to me in a great puzzle of mind; and when I coaxed him to tell every thing, the thought enthered into my head to advise him to make a purtense of doing what you wanted him to do; because I guessed that if you were sure the deed was done, you'd be for provin' plain to him that he was the son of the murthered man."

"In the devil's name, who are you?" asked Stokesbury.

"Why, for the matther of that, we'll neither say nor do, make question nor give answer, in the divil's name; we want to have no rubbins to his sort; we are not his sarvants. And, more be token, masther Harry, to remind you that the divil and myself are no great cronies, didn't I spile sport on him this very night?"

"Who, or what are you, I say?"

"And don't you remember axin' me that question before now, the night of the last bonfire? and don't you remember the plain answer I made you, masther Harry?"

"No, fellow! I have no recollection whatever of you; speak plain, now, and at once, and curse you!"

"Och, as to the curse, *crossh-chrustha* betwees you me, and all harm, amin; but it's known to all

the neighbours that I hould authority over the Mayor of this town; I have rule of Wind-gap hill, and I believe that's a step above him; by raison its on a hoight if there was no other raison. And I'm come here to-night, me and my Mayor's council, that you see at ach side o' me, to bring pace and good will, undher God, mâsther Harry Stokesbury; to fend, and to prove, and to make the right appear clear before the world."

"We'll see the right done, plaze God," said ould Daddy Leeach; and Gregory Roche gave his consent by iterating with a bow, "plaze God."

Stokesbury continued for a space, staring at the law-givers, as if to make them out, or comprehend the nature of their interference. Suddenly, with a careless shrug, he turned to Gerald Kennedy:

"I neither understand nor care about this *mummery*," he said; "but you know me as the foe of you and yours;—look to yourself;—my arm is over you;—look to yourself."

He strode about the room in the manner we have already attributed to him, when on board his pirate ship; he paused; he scrutinized anew the strange group near him; and then slowly and coolly he was leaving the apartment.

"You cannot pass us yet, Masther Harry," said Maurteen Maher, intercepting him.

"No! and who opposes my free passage?" laughed Stokesbury.

"I!" answered Maurteen, "but 'tis only for

your good, and the good of others; we want to know your intentions, and to make you have good intentions, afore you quit us."

"Out of my way, idiot!" The bravo raised his hand.

The Mayor on his part struck his wand of office sharply against the floor; and Stokesbury was instantly seized by four powerful fellows who issued from behind the screen whence his worship himself had made his appearance; and one of them was Meehawl O'Moore, the man of straw, upon the night of the bonfire; and another was the young giant who had masqueraded as his female companion, on the same occasion. Stokesbury was so truly taken by surprise that he could offer no resistance; and in a few seconds he found himself deprived of his pistols, which he wore in his belt, under his cloak, and of the sinister-looking hanger which dangled at his side.

Directly Stokesbury was secured, and rendered incapable of doing what the Mayor of Wind-gap feared he might do, namely, an outrage in the house which covered them both. Maurteen commanded his satellites to leave the pirate free, loudly adding, "and take yourselves home to Wind-gap, now, as fast as ye can trot, and go to your beds, and sleep away the remainder o' the night, or rather, the morning that's left; but," he added, into the ear of Meehawl O'Moore, without any person's observation, "Stay in this house, for all that; and if ye do any thing better than another,

keep a strict watch on the door of Mr. Kennedy's room;" and so his efficient, but illegal, bailiffs departed.

The Mayor now regularly turned to the business before him; and, in proceeding with it, proved not only that he had well studied his part, but also the character of the man he had to deal with.

Without at all losing sight of his own dignity, he began by craving Stokesbury's forgiveness for having ordered his detention; and explaining himself, upon the grounds that he had acted for Stokesbury's own good, as well as of that of every other human being; and that his only objects were the promotion of "pace and quietness, and making the right appear."

For he knew that Stokesbury's deadly and devilish rage against his cousin proceeded from a misapprehension of that cousin's conduct, *in all* the matters which related to them both. He knew that by the villanous contrivances of Kynan Donnelly, Harry Stokesbury had been induced to regard Connor Kennedy in the light in which the unfortunate bravo had represented him to Gerald, while urging the young man to become a murderer. He knew that Stokesbury, originally engrossed by an all-absorbing hatred and passion, as well as by his rapid changes from place to place, each being remote from the other, and particularly by the mode of life in which he was now confirmed, had neither had wish nor opportunity to undeceive himself; he knew, in fact, that up to

the present moment, he had acted altogether on false impressions; and the peacemaker of Wind-gap now set about placing the true state of the case before Stokesbury's eyes.

The reader is already generally acquainted with the facts necessary to be detailed for the object he had in view, by Maurteen Maher, in order "to make the right appear." But Maurteen did not content himself with mere assertions: upon each point necessary to be established he was ready, either with proofs or with witnesses. By the very mouth of the person who had drawn up old Stokesbury's will, and who awaited his summons in a contiguous apartment, he demonstrated, not only that Connor Kennedy had not intrigued to have that instrument moulded to his purposes, or in his favour, but that he had endeavoured, by every means, to prevent it from being so framed; nay, that the very moment it had come into his hands he had destroyed it.

By another evidence, as well as by the production of authenticated accounts, he proved that Connor Kennedy, so far from making use of the yearly proceeds of his cousin's paternal property, had most profitably accumulated them; and moreover, to the sum thus realized, he had added the unfortunate Mary Bryan's dower, living only upon the pittance of its interest, and destining all as a provision for Stokesbury's daughter Anny.

His worship of Wind-gap farther demonstrated that Connor Kennedy was not to be blamed for his

cousin's miserable exposure at the bar of justice; inasmuch as he had been a poor maniac at the time, and for many years subsequently; and one of the most important points of his case, that Mary Bryan and Connor Kennedy had been man and wife two months before the drawing of old Stokesbury's will; and that, of course, their marriage had not been brought about in order to accommodate themselves, in the Law's eye, to its provisions.

Having gone so far in his case, Maurteen Maher paused a moment to observe what effect it and his own oratory had produced. When he first began to speak, he saw that he was listened to with lofty, though suppressed, rage, and withering contempt, alone. To this succeeded a haughty indifference and an air of abstraction, real or assumed. But when the person who had *drawn* up the will entered the room, and declared what he knew, Stokesbury's look and manner evinced a great and stern surprise. Then he showed incredulity and contempt again. He condescended, however, to cross-question this witness, and, finding him firm and consistent, his features, despite of his evident attempts to master them, now wore an astounded expression.

Connor Kennedy's accounts were laid before him by a confidential clerk. He snatched the books, and examined them with a deep frowning attention; sometimes looking off the columns of figures, straight before him, with a vague stare; or

drawing in his lips, or heaving long, hard sighs: and when, at length, his investigation had ended, he sat motionless on his chair, his clenched hands resting upon his knees.

The Mayor of Wind-gap, not quite dissatisfied with these signs of the inward workings of the man, judiciously went forward, in course, to the most difficult topic he had to approach and arrange.

He began it by speaking of Kynan Donnelly. Without yet making effective use of him, he dwelt upon his character, as deceptive, lying, venal, and treacherous; appealed to Stokesbury to admit his general assertions, and he experienced, at least, no dissent, from them. He next roundly accused the fellow of treachery towards Stokesbury himself; nay, and of a deeper kind than he had ever practised upon any one else. The listener started up, fully aroused and earnest. Maurteen repeated what he had said, and then divided his accusation into separate charges, the last of which seemed to to drive Stokesbury almost frantic.

"Since proofs are so ready to your hand, old man, these things you must prove to me, as clear as the day's light, by heaven!" he cried.

"Nothin' aisier in life, Masther Harry, dear," replied the Mayor, smiling; "and before continuing regularly, he dwelt upon the heinousness of Donnelly's ingratitude, in being capable of committing towards his old master, and first and best

benefactor, deception or wrong of any kind; and Maurteen mixed up with all this a due portion of deferential bearing, and a little judicious flattery towards "Masther" Harry Stokesbury; and he repeated "nothing asier in life, as I told you afore: will the words out of his own mouth bring content to your mind? if we can contrive, with the little sense the Lord gave us, to have you overhear him confess every thing I lay at his door, what will you think of us, then, Masther Harry?"

In fine, his worship, with many entreaties, prevailed upon Stokesbury to retire behind the screen, before spoken of; then went down stairs; returned with Donnelly by his side; led him close to the screen, and began speaking with him in a tone of voice sufficiently low not to reach the ears of his council and of Gerald *Kennedy*, who stood at the opposite corner of the room, and yet loud enough to convey to Stokesbury every word they interchanged together.

"Kynan Donnelly, every thing is done clever, in the way that you and I layed it out; Harry Stokesbury is in the body of the jail."

"And you tould him that you had me locked up on the same score?" asked the ruffian.

"I tould him so, sure enough;"—just as you bid me do, Kynan, my boy."

"Was there any notion in his head that I turned agin him, in the long run, Maurteen?"

"Masther, ay; now that you remind me of it,

I won't say but there was somethin' o' the kind in his head, honest Kynan; for when Roger Divey, and all the rest o' them, were taking him away to his night's lodging, a little while ago, he turned round to me, and, with a look that frightened me, says he, 'This is Donnelly's doin's,' says he; 'tell him I know him; tell him that I found out a thing or two about him since we last parted; tell him that I know it was between him and Roger Divey I was sould the night I broke open the Inch house; tell him that it was by his contrivance Mary Bryan was married to Connor Kennedy; and tell him over again," says he, "that I'll pay him for all togither, before he and I are much oulder."

"Murdher and fury! did he spake those words to you, Maurteen Maher?"

"The very words I tell to you he spoke to me."

"By the night that's in id! an' I had a fear all along of his comin', somehow, to that knowledge. Oh! if 'tis a thing he gets free this time, I'm a gone man! I wouldn't give a rotten *thrauneen* for my own life, if ever he comes again beyond the jail dour. Were the life of ten cats in me, he'd have 'em all: were I hidin' twenty perches under the ground, he'd dig me up, and he'd dhrag me up into the day-light, and another day-light I'd never see."

"You say what's thrue enough, Kynan Donnelly," assented the Mayor of Wind-gap, with

very much of the air and manner of a Job's comforter.

"There's but one way left for me to turn; I must jump up on the green cloth, and sware agin him on his thrial; I have more knowledge of his ways than 'ud hang twenty men!"

"It's well guessed you have, Kynan; I know, of my own knowledge, that no one can tell bether nor you who forced off Juff Carroll's daughter."

"It was himself! an' I'll prove it agin him; there's no one to stand up for Kynan Donnelly now, but Kynan Donnelly's four bones."

"And taking away Miss Anny Kennedy, too?" continued Maurteen Maher.

"Yes, and that, too;—I'll sware down all, all I know, to hang him well, well!"

"But if you didn't sware agin him at all, Kynan, it's the like enough he'd forgive you, as Connor Kennedy did."

"Forgive me! oh, never, till the day of judgment, and the day after it, into the bargain, if *he* knows *me* as, he says, *I* know *him*."

"But, sure, he'd understand, now, after twenty years, at laste, there was no great blame to be laid to you for bringing about the marriage between Mary Bryan and Connor Kennedy? Didn't he give you good cause for a little revenge of that kind, a short while afore?"

"Who tould you o' that?" demanded Donnelly, in surprise.

"Oh! I was good friends with your poor Nance Dunney; I had a liking for her as well as yourself, and I could have found it in my heart to give a helping hand at the killing o' Masther Harry, when he brought the destruction on her young head; and sure, as I said afore, you had some right to make Mary Bryan turn away from him, when he took Nance Dunney from you."

"I know there was little blame to me for doing what I did; I had a long love for Nance, and I'd do any thing, at that time, to be even with him, on her account."

"No wondher, no wondher; and, sure, if you hadn't tould him all them stories about Connor Kennedy, Masther Harry and he would have come together again, in the long run, and you would have been found out, wouldn't you?"

"Ay, ay; but they'd lay their heads together, and I'd be done for instead of Connor Kennedy."

"There's little doubt of that, I believe," again agreed the Mayor, gravely nodding at him; "and wasn't it the same thing over again, the night he broke into the Inch-house? Sure, if Roger Divey and yourself hadn't brought the army on him, he'd have soon come to the bottom of the whole business?"

"There's no denyin' id, Maurteen Maher."

"Well, well," continued Maurteen, more gravely, and even ominously: "and I'm not far asthray, Kynan Donnelly, if what you're afther sayin'

doesn't turn out to be enough *to make the blind get back their eye-sighth.*"

While laying particular emphasis on these last words, Maurteen allowed, as if by chance, his wand of office to tap against the screen; and while Donnelly was gazing at the Mayor, to try and ascertain the cause of his altered tone and manner, his eyes followed those of his worship, and rested on the person of Harry Stokesbury.

The effect produced upon the scoundrel was inexpressible. He saw that he was betrayed on every side, and that the man whose power he regarded as almost unbounded, and whose retaliation he well knew to be terrible, was now in full possession of his villanous practices. He could not withdraw his glance from that of the object of his dread, which became immediately, and overpoweringly, fixed on his. His cheeks and lips grew ashy-livid, and his limbs shook till they smote each other.

"I have been listening to you," said Stokesbury, in a deep, guttural under-voice, "and I need not tell you I will answer you."

He recommenced his former hasty pace about the room, while Donnelly staggered into a corner. He stopped—turned his regards on the floor, and seemed wrapped up in his thoughts; and he stopped only a few feet from the spot to which Donnelly had retired. Suddenly the wretch's eye caught the pistol flung away by Gerald Kennedy: he cringed down cautiously for it; and, his sole im-

pulse being now to rid himself of the tremendous man whom he had just aroused to vengeance—the weapon was instantly at Stokesbury's ear. Gerald Kennedy sprang forward, and seized, and bore down his arm.

"What!" muttered Stokesbury to himself, "and is that action possible from that boy?—Is it really possible, from what they call their human nature?" And he looked on with a stern, half-smiling, curiosity and interest.

"Let go my arm," said Donelly, in a shivering whisper, as if he spoke confidentially, what he deemed worthy of attention from the person he addressed. "Let go my arm!—didn't you hear the words he said? I remember well they were the same he spoke when he made up his mind to kill Connor Kennedy. Let go my arm, I say."

Gerald still only endeavoured to wrest the pistol from him.

"By the fire of hell, then!" roared Donnelly, forgetting his former intention, and suddenly fixing his vengeance on the person who had crossed him:—"Your life, or my life, for it!"

They struggled again. Stokesbury took a half step forward, as if to interfere, and by one twist of his arm end the dispute; but keenly eyeing the vigorous efforts of Gerald, he arrested himself, still strangely smiling. We have said, that Meehawl O'Moore, and his three sub-bailiffs, had retired to do duty in a remote part of the house: old Joseph Fitzgerald had for some time also with-

drawn, to share his terrors with his wife; so that, except Stokesbury, and the Mayor of Wind-gap and his council, no one was now present to interrupt the deadly tug which went on. Stokesbury, however, would not interrupt it; and when old "Daddy Leeach" courageously, though impotently, and when Gregory Roche, politely, though in a very cowardly fashion, made signs of peace-making, Maurteen Maher giving way, notwithstanding "the little sense that the Lord had blessed him with," and that the "neighbours" had avouched he possessed, to the leaven of superstition, imbedded in his habits, authoritatively waived his wand, and cried out—

"No, Shawn Leeach! No, Gregory Roche! Let ach man o'ye keep back! It is his doom! It is his doom, that he's working through! it is the hour of his doom that is coming upon him! He will kill, or he'll be killed on the spot! Let no man meddle with his doom!"

Daddy Leeach and Gregory Roche could, therefore, only look on, during the exciting contest; the snowy head of the former, universally palsied with great anxiety, and the latter, ejaculating, in fear or in admiration, at intervals.

But the Mayor of Wind-gap spoke most and loudest:—"Gorsoon," said he, "your hour is come! Mind yourself! Mind yourself, Gerald Kennedy! He is a sthrong man you're wrastling with —your life is at the risk, boy! Oh Mother of God! you are doing a foolish thing now! Take your hand

from his throath!—and hould *his* hand, that has got the pistol in it! Och! och! och! He does not heed me! It is at your head, now, Gerald Kennedy! Och! the Lord be with you!—but no, —the pistol wasn't cocked, or you were dead! And now he's cocking it with his teeth! Take your hand from his throath, I bid ye!—take your hand from his throath!"

The combatants here fell on the floor together. Gerald Kennedy under Donnelly; and a cry of terror burst from the Mayor and his council. A second time Henry Stokesbury stepped forward, perhaps to the young man's aid; but before he could manifest his intentions, the pistol exploded. For an instant, Gerald and Donnelly were hidden by its smoke; after which the former jumped up, unhurt, shaking from him the dead body of his antagonist; it was, however, the wretch's own finger which had pulled the trigger of the weapon, without knowing it, its muzzle had been pointed to his own head.

The Mayor and his wise men hurried to Gerald, and overpowered him with congratulations;—they turned to observe Stokesbury. His eyes were rivetted upon the youth, with, Maurteen Maher thought, something like a manly and generous expression;—nay, the old philosopher of Windgap deemed that "Masther Henry" appeared half-inclined, also to step forward, and shake him by the hand. But Joseph Fitzgerald, if possible, still more terrified than ever, re-entered the room,

and saying, "From your cousin, Mr. Kennedy, sir," presented a letter to his old master.

Stokesbury tore open the seal, read the letter, and stood motionless, and, to all who saw him, incomprehensible, in the middle of the apartment. Moisture stole over his forehead, which he wiped off with his spread palm. He read the epistle again. He clasped his hands over the crown of his head; he dragged them down, slowly, and pressed them tight across his eyes. They unclasped themselves, and he quickly, and often, glanced towards Gerald:—he seemed indecisive,—uncharactered;—or, we might more properly say, perhaps, beginning to be re-charactered. After another short pause, he walked suddenly to the lad—seized both his wrists, and wrung them; then turned as suddenly to Maurteen Maher, and whispered a word to him; then said to Joseph Fitzgerald,—"My answer is—'No, not to-night;'" and after this, he slowly quitted the apartment, and the house.

CHAPTER XXI.

EARLY the next day, Maurteen Maher, pretending that it was a favourable one "for the sport," buckled on his fishing-basket, and, with his angle in his hand, sauntered slowly along the river's bank. Brother sportsmen thought him grown very ungracious of a sudden, however; for they remarked that the sun shone hotly upon the water, and the most foolish young trout beneath its surface would have sense enough to remain, till the cool of the evening, at least, as near the bottom of the river as possible. But, careless of these criticisms, the Mayor pursued his way, and might be seen, at a little distance from Wind-gap screwing together his fishing-rod, and gravely making all necessary preparations for engaging in his favourite pastime. The only persons who ventured to vindicate the sanity of his proceedings, after he had turned his back on his subjects, were his council, Shawn Leeach and Gregory Roche; and then

it became publicly whispered that he and they had been stricken—"the three o' them together," and at one and the same time, with a very singular want of common sense; and great was the sensation of awe and regret thereby impressed upon "the neighbours." Nor was it till the real object of old Maurteen's ramble, that day, became guessed at, some time after, that he and his superior law-givers were reinstated in popular confidence.

At a lonely spot, by the river's side, about a mile from his commonwealth, Maurteen encountered a man, carefully disguised, in a great coat, bushy wig, and an uncouthly-shaped hat. They seemed to meet by previous appointment; and, while they spoke at length together, Maurteen in a cautious voice, and the other in a broken, half-wailing one, now took the private path to the house at the Inch, and, unobserved by any person, entered it at the rear.

We next find Maurteen seated at the curiously-carved table, in the curiously-furnished room of which, on a former occasion, we have had a passing knowledge. Henry Stokesbury sits before him, and they are alone.

The countenance of the old diplomatist, notwithstanding a previous resolution to keep it calm and impassive, was sharpened and lengthened into a curious expression of shrewd investigation and reasoning, of doubting, and hoping, and balancing, of gratified good-feeling, and of wary anxiety.

The character of that of the pirate, we scarce venture to indicate. Its sternness, its fierceness, its sneer, its recklessness, its daring, still remained stamped upon it; yet these qualities of his mind and habits might, perhaps, be said at present to be exteriorly legible, rather from the remains of the effects of their former physical manifestation, than from any outward play of them, which, as Maurteen Maher studied his companion, now met the eye. Oftener than in his life before, his powerful glances were half veiled beneath his falling lids, or else they dropped upon the floor. He sat quieter, and more composed than usual: and, above all things, his voice was modulated, generally speaking, into sounds that did not startle, or offend, or grate on the ear of a listener; although, now and then, Maurteen found that the most slightly-injudicious word or question, or something not clearly understood, or else caught up without sufficient examination, was enough to bring an echo of the old explosions round his head.

The two had for some time been conversing; they continued, after a pause, old Maurteen leading the discourse, as, indeed, he had done since they sat down together.

"In the name of Him who is ever ready to forgive us all, you had better see that man, Masther Harry, *a chorra;* just let me send to the town for him—won't you?"

"No.—But I do not refuse, because I do not

forgive;—tush—I have nothing to forgive—nothing, to a human creature, except myself. 'Tis not that;—no; but I cannot bring myself to look upon his face;—'twas always hateful to me; and how can it become pleasing to me of a sudden?"

"No, Masther Harry,—I ax your pardon for bein' unmannerly enough to make a contradiction; but, long afore it grew hateful to you, it was plasin' to you; and for a good rason—it had a great likeness to another one you loved dearly —to your own mother's."

"Hum—and that is true." He turned aside his head, and remained without speaking a moment; then resumed—"but no, no—curse it, no! Be silent, old fellow, on that point in future. And let us now end all our business. You can lead the girl back into the town. She prefers it to leaving Ireland with me. So, let her have her way. I deserve it from her. Pshaw! I deserve every thing—it's to your sister's affair—take her too, and settle it, and her, as you like. Here's a little bag of old gold for her; buy up your Mayoralty of Wind-gap with it, and share the estate between ye."

"Buy up Wind-gap wid id, sir?" smiled, nay, almost laughed, nay, almost grinned, the worahipful Maurteen Maher, unconsciously descending, a moment, from his staid point of habitual, self-commanding gravity. "And do you think there is enough o' goold in it for that same?"

"Pooh, nonsense! don't annoy me farther upon a matter already settled."

Maurteen weighed the money-bag between his hands, and drew a long sigh.

"It's a truth," he resumed, "that there must be a great dale o' the goold in it, but I'll tell you what's come into my mind, Masther Harry; I covet no more out of it, nor out o' you, than what will keep my poor sisther from wantin' the bare bread, while she's alive on this earth, repentin' of her sins, and if there's more than that in the little bag, I'd rather not take it home with me."

Stokesbury laughed. "Oh yes! I see; you think 'tis money not honestly come by; and, therefore, you won't have it, lest it should turn into bits of slate in your hands. Well, well, as you like; keep no portion of it you don't think yourself entitled to, but hand over the conscientious surplus to your chaplain, and he, I suppose, will know what to do with it."

"If you mane," answered Maurteen, "to help the poor priest of our chapel, and the poor chapel itself, Masther Harry, I don't see a betther thing you could do with any odds and ends ye may have to spare; he's a poor little ould man, God knows; and as to the poor little ould chapel, too, the rain does be droppin' down through the rotten thatch of its roof, over his bald head, while he says mass to us of a Sunday; an' sure when you'd have the prayers o' the Christians for a good ac-

tion o' that sort, 'twouldn't be money thrown away, supposin' you were a man as free from sin as the child is that never was born."

"Folly, I say, old oddity, I don't want your preachments to-day; I've been thinking of one thing or another without your help; take charge of this second little canvass bag, and share it as you like, between your two chaplains, below there —your loyal one, and your popish one; and hark ye, just tell them both to serve it out, amongst such poor devils as the world—mark ye, as the world—thinks want it least."

"The Lord reward ye!" muttered Maurteen, piously, and heart-touched; for he saw that under the words and the manner of Harry Stokesbury, there was still something like a conviction of wrong, and a wish for, at least, earthly atonement. "The Lord reward ye, as ye deserve to be rewarded, from your present feelings."

"Amen, old man!" said Stokesbury, hastily, and his companion scarce heard his words, nor was he himself quite conscious of them.

"What did you say, Masther Harry!"

"Nothing, nothing; but here's a little silk purse, full enough of guineas, too, that you are to leave at the door of a foolish man, here, one Carroll, I think; and there may be other people in this neighbourhood who imagine I have annoyed them; and for their whims, also, there is provision enough under my hands, at your worship's service;

and so now, stuff the only fishes you have caught to-day into that ridiculous looking basket on your back; and as Anny is clamorous for your protection into the town—a curious old fellow you must be by the way, to make us all so dependent on you. You may go look for her through the house, and you'll find her in some chamber, closeted with your sister—whom she has already made a saint of—and that Juff Carroll's daughter, and Juff Carroll's niece into the bargain; and then ye may lead the whole bevy where ye like, and do whatever you wish with them; quick, quick! for I have something else to think of before night." —

"But your own daughter won't lave the house, without seeing you, Masther Harry?" queried Maurteen.

"Oh yes, yes, she will! she does not wish to see any more of me: she wishes, from her heart," he added, in the most humane tone, which Maurteen had yet heard him utter, "she wishes, from her heart, that she had never, never seen me, or heard of me."

"And I'll be bound, you are wrong again, Masther Harry, in saying that; I have a way of my own, in finding out what a body thinks of another body; and I know one thing this moment—Miss Anny would cross the says with you, from Ireland's ground, if she could only hear you tell that the boy she loves and likes was to be at her side;

and understand from you, moreover, where ye were all goin' to live, and what ye were all to do for a livin' when ye get there."

Stokesbury laughed again, but not heartily, nor with his usual expression, and said, "What absurdity! as for that lad, and Anny, why should I hinder their coming together? but as for the other question, I have already answered *you* by saying, I would never answer *it*, old fellow: it will be enough for you all to know that wherever I go, or whatever I do, when for the last time I leave my native country—and that, too, in a few hours—I will not go where I have gone before, and I will not do what I have done before."

"The Lord be praised for them words, and keep ye in your own good resolution, Masther Harry, *a chorra*," exclaimed old Maurteen, tears starting from his eyes as he steadfastly and compassionately regarded him.

"What! you old fool," cried Stokesbury, smiling gruffly, as their glances met, "and do you mean to make me think that I shall leave a single human being behind me, in Ireland, whose eye can moisten at a recollection of me, or of my fate or fortune?"

"I do, Masther Harry, I do! answered Maurteen, standing up, impassioned—"and I tell you more than that; I tell you that you'll lave friends at home—here, near the ould house at the Inch—

that will think of you, and have compassion for you, and pray for a forgiveness for you, to their dying day—and I tell you that I'm one of them friends; will you shake my ould hand and let me hear from your lips that ye b'lieve what I say is the thruth?"

Instead of waiting to receive the hand that he had asked for, Maurteen suddenly took, and wrung it. Stokesbury, still seated, first stared at him; then, with a half-sneer, half-smile, turned away his face, and returned the old man's grasp.

"And, och, I'm only the last, and the laste worthy of them friends," continued Maurteen. "Come in, Miss Anny, come in! avoch! sure you're another of them, an' many steps higher than me, even if I were sated in my chair, on the top of Wind-gap itself! and come in, Miss Anny, wid the better friend than all, that's now at your side."

Maurteen spoke this close to the door; it was timidly, and slowly opened, and Harry Stokesbury saw his daughter enter the room, supporting on her arm a tall, worn man, whose head and shoulders, drooped and bent prematurely forward, whose face was pale, and greatly agitated, and whose step was nervously unsure. He slowly arose; approached the weeping girl, and, in answer to her unexpected proffer, touched with his lips, in surprise, in deep feeling, and almost in confusion, her tearful cheek.

"And who is your friend, Anny?" he asked.

"*Your* cousin, father," she answered, bursting into fresh tears: "your cousin, Connor Kennedy."

He started back to a great distance, and yet, not in avoidance, or dislike, but evidently in utter amazement, and perhaps sympathy.

"What! that man, Connor Kennedy! that man, the Connor Kennedy, now only in the prime of life, as to years, who, when I saw him last, was so tall, and so straight, and so comely?"

"Yes, Masther Harry, that is the man," said Maurteen Maher.

"Yes, Harry, I am the man, and the man, too, that loved you then, as he loves you now, without a difference as to time, or chance, or accident: Harry Stokesbury, my dear cousin, forgive me, and take my hand."

"Forgive you, Connor! *I* forgive *you*?"

Stokesbury, quite thrown off his guard, seized the hands that were outstretched to him; these hands he felt gradually free themselves and glide along his arms to his shoulders; and almost in spite of himself, at the moment, though not afterwards with regret, to his recollections, he once more embraced the cousin whom in early life he had loved.

A few words close our story. After some conversation, Stokesbury placed in Connor Kennedy's hands the legal documental proofs of his marriage

in a foreign country, with the mother of his daughter Anny—together with a detail of the circumstances which caused their separation almost immediately after marriage, and her return to Europe; and Connor Kennedy explained the chances, and the means, by which he had become acquainted with the almost destitute state of the degraded lady, and had it in his power to succour her, and upon her death, adopt her orphan girl.

Anny was not present during this explanation.

"That girl," observed Stokesbury, suddenly, "will never become your son's wife, if she knows that she is the child of a really degraded father, so guard well from her some points of the history of my life, Connor; at least, till they are married."

"All that you wish shall be done," replied Kennedy; "and though you cannot stay with us, shall we not hear from you, when you are settled abroad?"

"Do you really wish it!" asked Stokesbury.

"Oh, God knows, God knows I do," he replied, clasping his hands, and looking upwards with streaming eyes.

"You shall, then," resumed the other, tightly grasping his arm—and Maurteen thought he observed the first glistening of moisture upon the lids of the outcast man.

Connor Kennedy did afterwards hear from Harry Stokesbury, and to his satisfaction.

That night, a coach-and-four was seen at a late hour to dash furiously away from the house at the Inch, by a peasant, who chanced upon some extreme case of necessity to be out of his bed, at the time; and this observer reported that the coach was black; that the horses were black; that the two very ill-favoured, grinning postillions, who shouted furiously, as they cracked their whips, and made their horses gallop along, were also very nearly black; that the horses snorted fire, to say nothing of their pawing it up, out of the road! and that the wheels were encircled with ribands of flame. And other things, related of this sudden and mysterious departure, left, after due consideration, upon the minds of the dwellers near the Inch house, that its strange man had all along been connected with no creditable acquaintances, who, at last, had come to claim him, and lead him home. Some, indeed, objected to his having been waited upon with a carriage, remarking that "them kind of folk," need not have used any such means to make sure of his person; but the majority easily explained this away, by making the

devil allow him a stylish turn-out at his exit from this world, in polite deference to the rank which he had held in it; and a few knowing ones, who would be original enough to differ from this judgment, suggested that the carriage might have been driven up to the door of the house, in order to wheedle him into a seat in it, and then had whirled him off, against his will.

These charitable conclusions seemed afterwards corroborated by some awful occurrences. Just facing the celebrated house, at the opposite side of the river, stood a large granite rock, and nearly under its shadow dwelt the largest trout in the river; nearly all "sieve-makers," in Maurteen Maher's parlance; and after night-fall of a fine evening was the best time to take these esteemed denizens of the water:—well—a certain gigantic smith, Shaw Mulligan by name, and his son Pandye, were great frequenters of this popular angling station; and during the night of the suspicious journey of the strange man, they had been fishing there as usual; when, lo, of a sudden, Shawn was dragged up to the top of the rock, and, from his convenient elevation, he saw, looking across the river, flashes of fire ascend from the ground round the Inch house, and running, and capering through them, the figure of a man, who tossed his arms on high in a most fearful manner; and thenceforward, never did Shawn, or

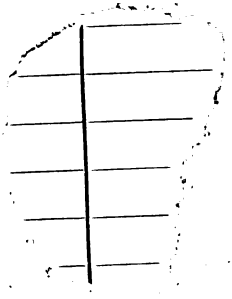
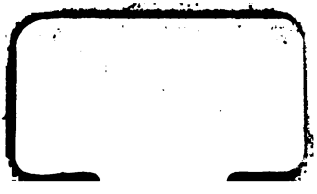
his son, or any one, on whom they had influence, venture near the granite-rock after nightfall.

But another person, who, unfortunately, had not heard this tale of terror, occupied the same spot a few nights afterwards; and while in the very act of casting his line over a trout that rolled in the water, he said, like a "gear ould dog," he was suddenly seized by the skirts of his coat, and pulled backwards with a force that nearly dragged not only the skirts out of that coat, but the backbone out of his own body; all the while that the most devilish shouts and laughter were let loose into his ears; and, need it be added, that as soon as this ill-treated angler found himself free, he took to his heels; halted not till he had gained unhaunted ground; and thence plodded the rest of his way homeward to warn all his neighbours against visiting the unholy place on the river's side; no matter though at the loss of the finest trout that ever swam in the said river.

These terrible accidents, coupled with the strange man's still more terrible departure from the house at the Inch, and, indeed, with the vicinity of the dreaded house itself, soon left the famous rock pretty generally unvisited. In fact, only one individual continued to have the hardihood to resort to it during the stilly nights of summer; and great indeed was his courage, the neighbours thought,—for no one outwardly seemed

more impressed than himself with the perils there to be encountered. For many a long year, however, he turned to a good account his monopoly of this station;—and often, and often, as Gerald Kennedy and his wife strolled after night-fall along the banks of their beautiful stream, they were sure to stop and have a chat, under the huge pile of granite, with Maurteen Maher, the Mayor of Wind-gap.

THE END.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